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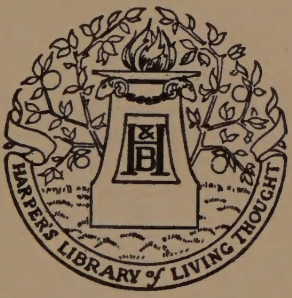

NATURAL CHRISTIANITY

BY THE HONBLE.
W. H.
FREMANTLE, D.D.
DEAN OF RIPON

HARPER & BROTHERS
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PREFACE

"NATURAL religion" has acquired a bad name; and the title of this treatise may suffer from it. I have endeavoured to meet this in the first pages of this book; but it may be well to state my purpose in writing it in a more direct and explicit manner.

My purpose, then, is to draw out the fact that Christianity, being divine and supreme, must assert and work out its sovereign position by blending with human life, and with the general development of the whole system of nature which God has made. The assertions of the introduction to the Gospel according to St. John have been followed out, which represent the Word of God as the foundation of all things visible and invisible, asserting that He speaks to the conscience of every man, that, as incarnate in Christ, He claims supremacy over every man and every society of men, and must reign over a united and redeemed universe: and further, that He has entrusted to all who believe in this purpose the duty of carrying it out in dependence upon Him. The Society or Church, therefore, which is to effect this must be universal, and every one who longs for righteousness ought to be welcomed into the band of those who are building up the Kingdom.

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I find, however, that many otherwise faithful men do not believe this, and are content to set before themselves and the Church the salvation or saintliness of a certain number, the rest (which they speak of as "the World") being left out. Natural Christianity, on the contrary, recognizes that Christ is, in His own words, "The Saviour of the World," and, in the words of St. John, "the Light which lighteth every man," the fountain of all goodness in all countries and ages, the guide of its development, and the assurance of its final triumph.

I find also that, in the carrying out of the mission of the Church, a wrong position and value has been assigned to the function of public worship. Our Lord said nothing about it, and gave no rules or exhortations about it, but bent all His energies to the inspiring of the whole life of His followers with the spirit of faith and righteousness. But now, when men think of religion and the Church, the idea before their minds is the practice of public worship, the buildings in which it is conducted, the regulation of its ministers, with some adjuncts of beneficence. But the true object of the Church is not merely to testify by word or by prayer, but to live out the whole life in all its branches, public and private, in all its relations to God and to man, in the faith and spirit of the Master. Towards this, no doubt, public worship is a great help; but it must be, as the Master left it, free,

comprehensive, and mutable. Instead of this, public worship has been made the supreme function; and rules about it, often belonging to former ages, are made the condition of partaking in it and of membership in the Church. Consequently religion is viewed as an exotic system, denaturalizing human life, and leading to alienation and strife. Natural Christianity must seek to redress the balance, making the life primary, and public worship and its adjuncts auxiliary.

I find that, mainly through the cause just mentioned, the mass of our working people, the very class from which our Saviour sprang, are alienated, first, from public worship, which seems to them to have no connection with their lives, and also, to a large extent, from religion itself. They are apt to look upon the ministers of religion as agents of a system which has been thrust upon them and to which they do not intend to be enslaved.

I find, further, that the strife between religion and science, though greatly mitigated, has been so by the perception, on both sides, that religion is an indispensable part of human nature, and also by the conviction that its assertions must not contravene the knowledge which we have of the outer world or of history, and, further, that, while seeking to realize the presence of God universally, it is not only permissible to His servants, but their duty in an age like ours, to investigate the means

by which he has wrought out His purposes. This conviction leads to that which is here advocated as Natural Christianity.

Further, I find that, amongst educated men, there is a tendency to be shy of religion as of something strange, the adherents of which do not speak their language or care for what they care for. A Christianity which cares for all sides of human life and all its interests may, I trust, do something to remove this feeling.

I am aware that much of what I am dealing with here is difficult, and in some ways perilous. But truth must come first, even in touching upon matters and men whom we love. It was said by Dr. Arnold that, the more he loved an institution, the more he wished for its reform and its perfection: and this saying holds good as to the whole field of life. Nothing can withdraw itself from criticism. But criticism does not imply denial, nor need inquiry lead to negation. And it may be permitted to one who has exercised a strenuous ministry of more than fifty years to commend by his experience the principles which have served him, and have given him an increased and convinced attachment to the Bible and the Church; and that, while opposed to any separate government by the clergy, he has lived in the fullest sympathy with the profession to which his life is devoted and the work of its ministers.

I have avoided the intricacies of Biblical

criticism by relying upon the passages which seem to be of unimpeachable authority, or to enunciate some truth which, when rightly apprehended, becomes axiomatic.

I may be allowed to say that, while I have given a strong opinion that the function of public worship has been unduly exalted in comparison with a complete life of faith and righteousness, this must not be taken as an undervaluing of this function itself; but as implying (1) that there is now, as there has been in most periods of Christian history, a danger of dwelling too exclusively and too rigidly upon its forms and rules; (2) that this has led to a growth of clerical power which, though little realized, is one of our greatest dangers; and (3) that the only antidote to this is to set forth the importance of a full life lived in Christian faith—that which I have called in a previous work "The Gospel of the Secular Life." If, in doing this, I have seemed to go too far, and said what may give offence, I would ask the reader to rectify this impression by the assurance that my object is not to lay stress upon any mere negation, but to enlarge men's views of God's purpose, and of the work of the Church as the instrument for bringing in His reign of universal justice and truth and love.

W. H. FREMANTLE.

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NATURAL CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER I

TRUE AND FALSE MEANINGS OF "NATURE" AND "NATURAL"

WHAT do we mean by the terms Nature and Natural? Sometimes we contrast Nature as non-human with Human Nature; but for the present discussion we take Man in all the range of his powers and organizations as part of Nature. Sometimes again, as when Rousseau spoke of a state of nature, what is meant is man in his rudimentary state—that is, man such as we know him now in mental power but without civilization—something which never existed if Evolution in any sense is true, and which therefore is an undefined fiction. Man has from the first been a progressive being. The words of Genesis, from whatever source they come, describe his true nature: Replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion. That is, Man's nature is social; and he is to hold supremacy, which implies knowledge. In this lies the germ of all intellectual and social develop-

ment. Man's nature is not statical but dynamical, and you must take the whole of his expansive powers as included in the term "human nature." In this Man is in the closest analogy with all living things. Their true nature is their full nature, growing towards perfection. Will anyone say that the true nature of a rose or a geranium is best seen in the hedgerow, and not in the finished product with its splendid colours, its outspread or doubled petals and its matchless scent? Why and how should we limit the nature of man to some arbitrary stage of his development? His true nature is his perfect nature, fully wrought out in all its powers—mental, social, and spiritual.

We may, no doubt, use popular language, as when we say, "There is a great deal of human nature about such a man," meaning that the ordinary, average human nature, which will have its own way, or resents and avenges injuries, is largely present in him. But we know, in speaking thus, that we are taking a part, the most common part no doubt, of human nature for the whole. And so when we speak of the "natural man" contrasted with the spiritual,* ψυχικός with πνευματικός, we are contrasting qualities, not spheres of being, the man in whom animality is

* It seems to be very unfortunate that our Revisers should have retained the word "natural" in this passage (1 Cor. xv. 44–9). It appears to imply that all that is spiritual is unnatural, and that man's true nature is destitute of the element of spirituality.

strong with the man in whom the higher life is developed. But it is the higher life which is natural. Similarly, when we speak of natural in contrast with artificial, we commonly imply that art is misdirected to produce a false impression; the true art, whether in "music" or "gymnastic," is the drawing out of the faculties in their proper line of evolution; when something false has crept in the true artist calls for a return to nature.

If it is asked, further, whether there is no contrast between nature and grace, between a man subjected to the ordinary influences of this world, of what he sees and hears, and a man subjected to the influences of the Spirit of God, we may answer, first, that the world around us includes the highest as well as the lowest influences, and that grace or spirituality as a quality of the soul is human nature in its noblest. It comes from God, you say. Yes; so do all things. But we must not separate God and the world. You cannot take in the world as a whole without taking in God; for God not only encircles but interpenetrates the world: He is the eternal energy by which it moves. But, secondly, we must answer that the supposition that there are some men wholly sensual and others wholly actuated by divine grace is a fiction. It is contrary to the doctrine of the New Testament which bids every man call God his Father, and acknowledges "the Light which lighteth every

man." We are in contact with the invisible and the spiritual at every moment and in every occupation. It is only for purposes of investigation and of science that we separate them. As in geometry we assume perfect circles and straight lines which do not exist in the actual objects before us; as in political economy we start from the hypothesis that a man is always and only seeking wealth, and this with complete knowledge and with full powers of self-determination, all of which hypotheses are creations of the imagination, so in religion we may isolate one sphere of being from another; but, in actual fact, there is no such separation. The material and the spiritual are subtly intertwined. No doubt if we were to say that God is part of nature we should go wrong, because He is "above all and through all and in us all." But we have a right to say that God is in the highest degree Natural. No part of nature can be separated from Him or be what it ought to be, what it is in its true essence, without Him.

The fault of the older writers on Natural Religion is that they have assumed a contrast between this and revealed religion. But revelation is itself eminently natural. St. Paul prays for his converts that they may have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation." * The drawing aside of the veil of our ignorance, whether by the pro-

* Eph. i. 17.

cesses of science or by the subtle intuitions which God imparts to man, and to which some men of exact science are not strangers in their own sphere, is a sublimation of natural processes, not a contradiction to them. The Deists of the eighteenth century erred by the stress which they laid on the negation of miracles, with which they bound up the whole work of redemption; and Butler's arguments against them are best when he shows that many of the things objected to are natural and reasonable, as when he points out that God punishes men through the working out of natural laws. The modern Theists again err, not in their direct teaching, which is often excellent, and excellent through its freedom, but in this, that they misunderstand the work of our Saviour, connecting it with the ideas of never-ending torments and substitutional punishment, and ignoring the redemptive power of sympathy which makes it possible for one man to raise others to God; and thus misunderstanding the work of Christ, as shown in such words as "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," and "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that, since one died for all, therefore all died." We may, then, apply the inductive method to theology. We may be truly Christian Positivists. It is remarkable that Bishop Westcott constantly maintained that Positivism was in many respects

a true form of religion.* The fault of Auguste Comte was not in applying the positive method to the whole of the phenomena with which a thinker has to deal, but in refusing to go as far as that method will safely carry us—that is, in refusing to acknowledge as anything knowable the Eternal Energy behind phenomena. The philosophy of the present day, even where it calls itself Agnostic, recognizes this Energy,† and even recognizes it as the chief of all facts. But the Agnostic equally with the Positivist errs in declaring it unknowable. I need hardly add that there are many things equally wrong in Comte's philosophy, which I only instance as being the most thorough attempt to treat all phenomena, material, social, and spiritual, as under the realm of law. He was especially, even ludicrously, wrong in the account he gave of the origin of Christianity, which, indeed, he seems never to have studied.

How, I ask, can we know any cause except by its effects? But, if we know Life, or Love, or Gravitation, or Ether, or the subtle influence of man upon man, by seeing these at work, and rising from the phenomena to their causes, why should we hesitate to acknowledge the Supreme Cause of all, and to clothe Him with the attributes of truth and beneficence which we see

* See his "Aspects of Positivism in Relation to Christianity" appended to *The Gospel of the Resurrection*.

† See quotation from Herbert Spencer, at p. 19.

working themselves out in the world? Man's capacity for religion—that is, for fellowship with God (or, to speak as a Positivist or an Agnostic, his power of apprehending the Universal Being and living in union with it)—is as demonstrable as his capacity for assimilating food. The saying of Augustine is a truth of experience: "O Lord, we are made for Thee; and our spirits have no rest till they find rest in Thee."

When men speak of rising from facts, or beginning with facts, they are apt to speak of external facts only, either those of the physical world or the manifestation of moral phenomena in events. But we must take in all the facts. The inner life of man is as much a fact as are the facts of optics or of some great battle. We have been too long under the dominion of externals. It is time that we should assert that the human personality, with all its functions and its needs, must always be the centre of interest. The value of the first chapter of Genesis is not that it gives a cosmogony more or less in harmony with subsequent investigations, but that, in contrast with the Pantheistic or idolatrous systems which divinized the external powers and placed man beneath them, it enthrones man as supreme, and makes him, not the sun or the winds or the lightning, the image of God. And, further, it is man in his relations, not in his individual capacity, that is dwelt upon. "In the image of God created

He him, male and female created He them." This may rightly seem to us to give a positive ground for the representation of the divine personality, not as merely individual, but as social; we need not dwell upon this here. What is much more important is that it points to the moral and social life, the life of true relations, the life of righteousness, as the necessary and supreme requirement of humanity. The Bible, therefore, which may be said to be the history of the establishment and practice of true relations between spiritual beings—that is, between God and man, and between man and man—is in the fullest sense human and natural.

The Bible culminates in Christ: and Christ has been viewed in past times in an unnatural light. Men have begun, we may venture to say, at the wrong end: they have supposed that they know the metaphysical nature of God, and have attributed this to Christ, and thus have made a contrast between the divine and the human elements in Him which has caused endless disputes; and these disputes have made His life unreal to us, and to a great extent destroyed its moral power. We are returning from this in the present day: yet, as it seems, we are hampered by the wrong processes of the past. The Synoptic Evangelists (we must begin with the Synoptics because they give us the simple narrative, while in the fourth Gospel St. John represents

the later and maturer phase of reflection) tell us of one who went about doing good, subject to all the conditions of our nature, but differing from us only in this, that his goodness is supreme.* This moral supremacy is the central point for every man who calls himself a Christian. In itself it is in the highest sense natural; it is in the adjuncts attributed to it, or the inferences drawn from it, that there is anything that can be called unnatural. But let a word be said as to Moral Supremacy. Men say that it is not the same as Divinity. But this comes from taking a low view of morality. Christian morality is the work of the Spirit of God. God is Love; and Christ is the image of that Love in humanity. On the moral side, therefore, which is of the chief importance to us, as being the most knowable and that from which all metaphysical ideas about God must start, to say that Christ is morally perfect is to say that He is divine.

* Perhaps a few words here may be devoted to the late Father Tyrrell's book, *Religion at the Crossways* (p. 228), which is an attempt to destroy the supremacy of moral goodness, and to go back to the idea that representations which he sometimes speaks of as metaphysical, sometimes as Apocalyptic, sometimes even as justifying the Zoroastrian notion of the perpetual antagonism of Ormuzd and Ahriman, are indispensable and supreme over righteousness, that these representations are preserved for us in the Roman Church and its ordinances, and that to deny these is worse than to deny God Himself. "A heretic," he says, "is worse than an infidel."

That which has here been called the chief point of all, the moral supremacy of Christ, must be taken for granted, since this treatise appeals to convinced and enthusiastic disciples of the Master. It is the chief point of all because God must be thought of not less as supreme power than as supreme goodness ; and, if we are convinced that Christ is morally supreme, we are thereby asserting that He is the image or Son of God. We are all sons of God, it may be said ; and Christ was not merely a very good man. We all feel that this is so ; but the definition of it is beyond us. It would be impossible here to attempt to show the features of His character and teaching which have convinced us personally, which have convinced generation after generation, even after it had seemed that their force had been discounted or that human progress had gone beyond them. Let it be assumed that we agree in reckoning Christ as the supreme Lord of our own consciences and of all human life. The deepest thought has always returned to Him ; and such a return we are now witnessing, unless we are much mistaken, not in our own country only and in America, but both in France and in Germany. But in France adhesion to Christ is marred among half the people by its being supposed to be necessarily connected with the Papal system, while the opponents of that system are rather in the position of seekers for a moral basis of their aspirations

than as having found one. The aspiration, however, is seen from time to time, and signally in a speech of M. Jaurès' addressed to the clerical party some three years ago.

CHAPTER II

MORALS, FAITH, AND IMMORTALITY

THE attempt we are making to harmonize, and in a certain sense identify, Christianity with the natural course of human life and history is often suspected because it is thought that it seems to shut out the eternal world, which is assumed to be the principal, or even the sole object of religion. On the one side Christianity is blamed as being nothing but "other-worldliness," and therefore as having little bearing on human progress; on the other it is said that to dwell on the moral side of Christianity detracts from the hopes of the eternal world and the highest parts of human life. These questions become very pressing when the *moral* training of the young is thought to be sufficient in itself, and is set in opposition to Christian teaching; and, on the other hand, when it is maintained that the highest moral teaching is worthless unless an element which is not moral, but is sometimes conceived as Apocalyptic, or in an exclusive sense spiritual and religious, be superadded, and the expression "other-worldliness" is accepted as right and necessary, and special religious

ceremonies or ideas, such as those of the Church of Rome, are reckoned necessary to the maintenance of this spirituality. But human nature is one, and the spiritual and the moral interlace one another; the Power also by which the whole world is upheld and actuated is *one*, so that the separation of the spiritual from the rest of the whole development is fictitious. It is of use only for the purposes of thought, and only for a season. The objects of faith are as real (to the believer,) as substantial and clear (Heb. xi. 1), as the things we see and touch. And those who have not embraced the faith which makes them so are really deficient in the exercise of the most important of human faculties. Moreover, the action of the invisible Energy over the visible results becomes clearer and clearer; materialism seems to have almost died out. And if the various attempts—whether of Faith healing or of psychical research, or even of so-called Christian science—should be able to bring the invisible world more definitely within the domain of exact knowledge, this would only mean that a part of nature with which scientific thought has hitherto been too little acquainted is becoming more fully known to us. It was said by Auguste Comte that religion was first revealed and afterwards reasoned out; and, though M. Comte, in his dogmatic manner, shut out as beyond our ken the belief of God, yet his saying is applicable to our Christian faith.

What we believe to have been imparted through the ancient seers and through Christ Himself by the immediate action of the Holy Spirit becomes the object of research and reasoning, and passes by degrees into positive knowledge.

We may look at this great matter from what may be called the other side. You say, Let us teach morals but not religion. Is this possible or desirable? You make a code of morals, but a code is but a small part of either morals or faith. You want many other things, especially the force of example, and the influence of mind upon mind, and the great and successful experiments in those sides of human life, of which history is full. Is it reasonable to leave out the history of the process through which we and the more cultivated branches of the human race have been impelled along the path of moral goodness? And, when we arrive at the conviction that the centre of this process is to be found in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, how can we in our moral teaching omit not only His teaching but His personality?

But if, on account of the unhappy divisions existing amongst Christians, this highest source of human goodness has to be omitted either in families or in public schools, or in public dealing with the social and political spheres, those who believe in Christ need not despair; for, if Christ is in every man and in all history and all know-

ledge, if the conscience of each man is the organ of the Holy Spirit, then we must believe that all honest teaching and all attempts to impart good principles are, as we may say, Christianity in its lower grades; and if, as we see to be the fact, the moral atmosphere of a Christian country, its literature and its public opinion, is very largely saturated with Christian ideas, we may believe that the lower grade will be a step upwards towards the higher. There can be ultimately but one moral standard, and it is that which is furnished to us by the Cross of Christ.

Still, we cannot but crave some firmer hold on the eternal world than human life and morality present to us. We may admit and assert that the various grades of moral life which we have touched upon fit into and lead up to one another. But we have, as all history shows, a craving for the knowledge of God and for an assurance that our hopes for the good of mankind are not cut short by death. We enter here on the region of faith; and much of the confusion which besets our religious ideas and conduct comes from the fact that faith and scientific certainty have not been realized as distinct faculties of the soul—equally natural and equally necessary to us, but still distinct. Yet faith is a faculty which we use every day, and without which our intercourse with one another could not be carried on. In the commonest transactions of business we often say

"We must trust somebody." The speculations of the merchant, the conduct of a household, the ventures of political life, all demand this faculty; much more does all social intercourse. Consequently, when a man feels that Jesus Christ has been to him the highest moral influence, he cannot but feel a longing to know and possess the power by which the life of the Master was supported. Christ was supported by prayer. We constantly read of His spending whole nights in prayer to God. He, therefore, who would follow Christ must himself pray and teach both young and old to pray. And prayer must be to him not merely an occasional act, but a constant communion with God.

But the assurance which this communion engenders is a moral one, like that which comes from the practice of justice or of kindness. If the distinction of faith and scientific certainty is not preserved, religion is turned into a set of propositions or of ceremonies which can be imposed upon men at all stages of their development, and then it becomes successively a bondage and an irritant, and finally a provocative to rebellion. This is what we see in its fullest form in France, and what we have to beware of in England.

CHAPTER III

PARTIAL AND IMPERFECT RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

IT is necessary to touch here upon some of the more fundamental questions which have been merely glanced at above.

The first of these is the relation of God to the world, and the attempts which have been made to define it.

There is no one, we may assume, that fails to acknowledge the existence of a power by which the whole world is moved, of something beyond and below the phenomena which meet our eyes and which we can see or hear or touch. To the Hindu or the Buddhist this spiritual substratum is alone the reality; the rest is Maya, a deceptive appearance. And in Europe we may see a tendency in the same direction, whether in the mediæval realists or of philosophies like that of Hegel in Germany. The spiritual is greater than the changing appearance, the idea or substance than the phenomena. To each of these God is the substance, the underlying reality, the informing and actuating Power of the whole universe. Such a belief when it passes into morals breeds

questions of the deepest kind. To the thoroughgoing pantheist there is no morality. The Hindu will say of a little child, "He is like God; good and evil are indifferent to him." It would be beyond the scope of a work like the present to go into the questions thus raised. The belief, however, in the immanence of God, which is to a certain extent liable to the same difficulties, we must touch upon in a later place.

We have said that no one presumes to deny the existence of some supreme power. M. Comte, indeed, is sometimes spoken of as an atheist; but his position was merely that of such a force as we call God nothing could be known. He was really an Agnostic, only protesting against those who professed to know more. Moreover, the Positive Philosophy must be credited with a great advance upon the philosophy of the previous century, which was materialistic. Comte placed man in the supreme place in the universe, as the Bible does; and not man as an animal or an automaton, nor only as endued with mind. The affections were to him the highest element in humanity. The world was ruled by the heart of man; and the Humanity, which he spoke of as God, was essentially Love. This must be acknowledged to have in it the rudiments of the teaching of St. John.

Let us take the Agnostics of our day, and we shall find in them almost always the rudiments of

a Natural Christianity. John Stuart Mill, for instance, was brought up as an atheist: but who could impute atheism, or deny the praise of deep thoughtfulness and desire for spiritual good, which is of the very nature of faith, to the man who wrote as follows, after a criticism of some of the faults of Christian systems: "I believe that the doctrines and precepts of Christ are irreconcileable with nothing which a comprehensive morality requires," and who declared his belief that no better rule of life for mankind in general could be given than that each man should ask himself before each action whether or not Christ would have approved it.

The testimony of Herbert Spencer is still clearer. His book upon ecclesiastical institutions concludes with the following remarkable passage:—

"But one truth must grow even clearer—the truth that there is an Inscrutable Existence everywhere manifested, to which he can neither find nor conceive either beginning or end. Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he is ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed." *

A similar testimony is borne by Huxley, who coined the word Agnostic. He is recorded as saying in reference to a power such as that

* Herbert Spencer, *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, p. 843.

described by Spencer, that if that were what was meant by God, "He would be a fool who, even in his heart, denied its existence." And he was fond of quoting the words of the prophet Micah: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

We might take the testimony of Matthew Arnold, who, though stumbling at the attribution of personality to God, yet showed the utmost value for the person of Christ, and insight into His teaching, and remained a communicant of the Church to the end of his life.

No one, probably, has been put forward as a teacher of pure atheism more than Haeckel, but his most recent work, *A Scientific Confession of Faith*, shows a clear return towards God and immortality. "God," he says, "as we are compelled by reflection to recognize, is not to be placed over against the material world as an external being, but as a divine power or moving spirit within the cosmos itself"; and "It is just as inconceivable that any of the atoms of our brain or of the energies of our spirit should vanish out of the world as that any other particle of matter or energy should do so." Mr. Page Hopps, who gives these quotations (*Contemporary Review*, January, 1911), sets beside them some words of the present Archbishop of York in which he speaks of God as "the great all-encompassing

energy of the universe, realizing Himself in the highest instincts and aspirations of men and in the lowest origins of life," "dwelling within the world of His own making, present in its processes, and realizing His will and purpose through them."

This idea of an Eternal Energy by which all things are sustained and impelled is an essential feature of the doctrine of evolution, by which all modern thought has been coloured. We need not touch upon the special form in which it appears in the *Origin of Species*, or in the opposing theories of Lamarck or Weissmann. When Darwin's work first appeared, the question was frequently asked: Does not this constitute a denial of the work of the Creator? "No," was the sufficient answer made by Asa Gray, Darwin's friend; "it is an attempt to show how the Creator has worked." * But this it unquestionably does; it makes us realize the presence of the same eternal Power in all parts of the Creation. This appears, indeed, in the modern physical doctrines of the correlation of forces and the conservation of energy.

Too much, however, has been made of the mode in which evolution takes place, and too

* Another of the prominent men of science at the time when Darwin's work was discussed by the British Association in 1860 pointed out to the present writer, who also was present at that memorable discussion, that the word Creation had only a negative significance, that it merely implied that we did not know the process by which, through the divine power, the world came into being, but which the evolutionist attempted to explain.

little of the evolving force. Men have been too ready to give up the enigma. Even Darwin, as is seen by his correspondence with his friend Asa Gray, said that it was doubtful if man had the faculties for solving it. But, without dogmatizing, we may ask how anything spiritual or immaterial can be known. We see the plant or the animal; we cannot see nor touch the immaterial thing which we call life. But no one can doubt that it is there, and that it is not a mere mechanism. We can understand something of its properties and its character, and may come to learn more even of its first appearance in the world.

So, when we realize the Eternal Energy, we can infer not only its existence, but also something of its properties and its mode of action. From it all things spring, says Spencer. Can we be wrong in inferring that the Being from which they spring is superior to them? Must not our reason follow that of the Psalmist: "He that planted the eye, shall he not see? and He that made the ear, shall He not hear?" We cannot be wrong in attributing personality and justice and love, and all the virtues to which the heart and conscience of man bear witness, to that Power from which man springs.

But if this be true, we must look to the presence of this Power in every part of the Creation. It is all of Him, and He is not merely omnipresent but immanent in all things.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

THE doctrine of the divine immanence is unquestionably a Christian one. The Preface of the fourth Gospel attests it. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "All things were made by Him" or through Him. And this assertion is not weakened by the fact that the Word, or Logos, or Memra (to use the word adopted by the religious thought of Palestine), which was so potent in the Egyptian religion and in the writings of Philo, passes also into the New Testament. It shows that Christianity is not a wholly new or separate thing, but is the crown of an edifice partly prepared beforehand; and this is substantially the teaching of St. Paul as well as St. John.

The immanence of Christ as the Word in every part of the creation is emphasized by Athanasius in his treatise on the Incarnation. See especially chapter XVII.

St. Augustine goes farther, and insists on the unity of the religious aspirations of men before Christ appeared with "that which is now called

the Christian religion." The passage is in his *Book Concerning the True Religion*, chap. I. § A: "Num res ipsa quæ nunc Christiana religio nuncupatur, erat apud antiquos, nec defuit ab initio generis humani quousque ipse Christus veniret in carne, unde vera religio quæ jam erat cœpit appellari Christiana.

"For that very thing which is now called the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and never was lacking from the beginning of the human race until the time when Christ Himself should come in the flesh; from which time the true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christian."

To revert now to the right conception of God, it must be said that the chief question is not, as has been commonly assumed, whether there is a God (for that is hardly denied), but rather what is the character of God. In the Bible there are hardly any passages arguing the existence of God, but the stress is laid on His character. "A God" might mean Moloch; but the God of Israel is the Lord who loves righteousness, who gives strength to the weak, who cares for the poor, who pardons iniquity. And these things, too, are assumed, not argued out. The appeal is to the universal conscience. But the revelation is gradual: the true character of God is unveiled by degrees; but it emerges at last into clearness in the prophets; and, after its full manifestation

in Christ, it becomes the inheritance of the world. A similar gradual process of unveiling had been going on among other nations, so that the prophets speak of Rahab (Egypt) and Babylon with "those who know God"; and when Christ is preached to the heathen at Antioch or Lystra, the apostle's word finds an echo in the hearts of the hearers.

In the opening passage of the fourth Gospel this naturalness and immanence of God and of Christ is clearly set forth. The Word of God is the creative power by which the whole world is built up; and that Word is the Light which comes to every man, making all who will receive it to become the sons of God. The whole process culminates in the manifestation of the Word in Christ. By Him, to quote the words of St. Paul (Col. i. 17), All things stand fast. The world is made for man, who is God's image; and Christ is in every man.

What is this but to say that the Word of God, who is immanent in the whole creation in all its ranks, and most of all in man, dwells by their very nature in all men? His voice is heard by all, though they do not all obey it.

Several questions arise about this.

1. It is asked whether God's immanence does not preclude the faith of His being a Father, to whom, as to a separate personality, we can look up and pray—who acts without us as well

as within ; whether, to use the words of religious philosophy, He is transcendent as well as immanent. We must maintain that He is both. It may be illustrated by a simple supposition. Every part of my body is partaker of the life that is in me. I am immanent in it, and my will directs it. Now, supposing that any part of the body should be endued with a life of its own (as, indeed, it is said that the body is made up of particles which have some sort of self-direction), and that it could act with consciousness and will, would that in any way interfere with its owning me and my life as the source of its life ? I should still maintain my position of transcendence over it ; and it, unless it should become rebellious and break through the natural order, would say, in the words of Tennyson, " Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

2. But what, then, of the more difficult problem of evil ? If the Spirit of the Almighty gives us breath and maintains our strength of body and of mind, then is He not maintaining us when we do wrong ? Does He not become our accomplice in our evil deeds ? We are here face to face with the two insoluble problems of free will and of the permission of our Maker and Preserver to His creatures to do wrong. We can only say that a willing servant is better than an automaton, that a repentant sinner is often better than one who needs no repentance, and that in God's infinite mercy He can (as our experience shows)

turn evil into good. "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all."

Meanwhile the doctrines of the unity of the world through the indwelling of God, and of His presence and that of Christ in all human consciences, is a great help to us in taking in the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. If Christ is in every man, then the Incarnation is the highest point of a process which is in its very essence natural: and, as St. John says, "The Word was the Light of every man," and "The Life was manifested," "the Word was made flesh." If, further, we acknowledge the Father and the Son to be alike God, and God to be a Spirit, we shall be little inclined either to doubt that the object of our worship is a Trinity, or to make assertions beyond those of Scripture, whether with the Western theology we speak of one Substance in three Persons, or with the Eastern of three Substances in one Essence. Yet we cannot but feel that these definitions belong more to philosophy than to faith; and in the form which they reach in the "Quicunque Vult" they are felt increasingly to be unfit for use in the congregation.

These considerations also solve for us the difficulties which have been felt in harmonizing moral goodness with religion when it is found in men who have not known Christ consciously, but have followed the divine voice which speaks in

their consciences; whether they be philosophers like Socrates, or founders of religions like Buddha, or simply good men whom we cannot call definitely religious. St. Paul says, "When the Gentiles do by nature the things of the law, they show the law written upon their hearts." *

If God be everywhere and in every man, then the promptings of good which they are obeying are those of the Holy Spirit; they partake of the *anima naturaliter Christiana*. And it has been well observed that when St. Paul speaks of the larger evolution of the Christian life, he uses the very words of Greek moral philosophy: "Whatsoever things are true or of good report, if there be any virtue or any praise, think on these things." We might think it was Aristotle who was speaking.

These considerations may help towards the solution of the question now agitated both in France and England respecting Moral Education, to which we have already referred. It is true that moral teaching, if religion is completely ignored, is stunted and insufficient; but there is no such break in the nature of things between morals and religion, as is presumed on both sides of this controversy. If God is the universal Energy, and is Himself in the highest sense a moral Power, then every sincere effort after goodness is a part of the work of His Spirit.

* Rom. ii. 15.

Those who wish to dispense with religion do so almost always because of the disputes which it begets through the undue stress laid on doctrinal forms or modes of worship or clerical organizations, all of which, though of great value, are not of the essence of the Christian religion. On this more will be said later on. It is enough at this point to insist that the essence of Christianity is Christ Himself, His life and death, His teaching and influence, and the confession of His divine Supremacy. History is without meaning if He is left out: is it thought that it could be taught with the omission of the lives of great men who have influenced human progress—of whom Christ is in almost any computation the greatest? "The true worshipping of God," says our Church in its Litany, is "righteousness and holiness of life." If the distinction between essentials and even the most important adjuncts were kept in view, and many of the things which have caused dispute were placed in the category of what logicians call "inseparable accidents," * a great step would be taken towards agreement.

The belief in the immanence of God also tends to clear up the mystery of prayer. The two highest forms of prayer are, first, Acceptance of the will of God; and, secondly, Communion with Him; and to these the ordinary objections do not apply. Do they really apply to the third and most com-

* Aldrich, c. i, § 6; Whately, b. ii, c. v, § 2.

mon category of prayer, that of petition? To a certain extent, yes; that is, if minute requests are proffered as a sort of demand, or if prayer is used as a kind of physical force—so many prayers, so much result. But this is not Christian prayer. But have not those who deprecate this abuse of prayer gone too far when they forbid the mother from asking for the life of her sick child or a famine-stricken people from crying to God for relief? The same God who prompts the prayer works through all the agencies which sway the intricate scheme of Creation, and we cannot limit His person or His wisdom in the use of them to bring about the results of His will.

If God is the underlying Power and Eternal Energy by which the whole world is actuated, prayer is the natural expression of our union with Him and the dependence of ourselves and of all things upon Him. To a Christian mind the question becomes simple. We have the right, as God's children and servants, to bring before Him everything that affects us in weal or woe, great or small. But we do so in consciousness of our ignorance. "O my Father, if it be possible." But "Thy will, not mine, be done." This cry is eminently natural. It suggested itself to Socrates in the prayer:—

Ζεῦ βασίλευ, τὰ μεν ἐσθλὰ καὶ εὐχομένοις καὶ ἀνεύκτοις
Ἄμμι διδού, τὰ δὲ λυγρὰ καὶ εὐχομιένων ἀπερύκου.

"Great Jove, the good, whether we ask or no,
Give us; the evil, ev'n though ask'd, deny."

CHAPTER V

THE MIRACULOUS

BUT now, if we dare to feel ourselves thus in contact with divinity, are we not in contact with that which has been called supernatural? And does this not lead to the belief in prodigies and miracles? There is a great deal of confusion and difficulty about this; but it seems to be gradually yielding to two considerations: (1) That scientific investigation is more ready than at any former time to acknowledge the importance of spiritual powers and experiences; (2) that Christian authority, the voice of the Spirit of God within us, both sanctions and demands such investigations.

This brings us to a discussion of what are commonly spoken of as miracles—that is, of works which are thought to have a special power to prove the truth of Christianity. The word is an unfortunate one, and should not be used if we can avoid it. What does it mean? To Paley and all his school, and in the common estimation of mankind, though it seems never to have been precisely defined, it appears to mean an effect which is without a cause, or one in which God has acted directly without any intervening medium; and the importance of

the event is supposed to lie in the assumed fact that it is contrary to the course of nature, that the laws of nature are in these cases broken through. But is not this an unwarranted assumption? and is there not the utmost danger in making such an assumption? The words by which these events are described, whether in their derivation or in their use, in Scripture or theology certainly do not warrant such a definition.

"Miraculum" means only a wonderful event; and this, whether or not we know the cause. If we add that it is an event which brings us consciously into the presence of God, that is done by every striking event—a battle, an eclipse, an earthquake. Such things bring before us in a special way the fact of the presence and energy of the Eternal. His power seems concentrated for the moment on one point; we seem to be face to face with God. "Surely God is in this place," or "Doubtless there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

The best and most testing illustration we can use is that of the crossing of the Red Sea. It has been commonly held—it was held by Matthew Arnold—that this was in an eminent sense miraculous. But it certainly was not an event without a cause, nor was it an instance of the exertion of the will of God without any intervening medium. The accounts are quite clear on this point. The

sea driven back by the strong east wind and leaving the sand dry, the storm-cloud beating in the face of the Egyptians while the lightning made clear the path of Israel, and the waters of the lagoons to the North and the Red Sea to the South serving as walls to mark out the path; the clear shining forth of the sun (the eye of God, as the thunder is His voice), and the returning tide of the morning which overwhelmed the Egyptians, are, all of them, the elements through which God is working. It is remarkable that when the book called the *Speaker's Commentary* was written, at a time of theological excitement, with the special object of reinforcing the faith in the authenticity of the Biblical narratives, the commentator of the Exodus treated each part of the account of the passage of the Red Sea as a description of natural phenomena. Was it, then, less a miracle? Was it less calculated to impress the minds of witnesses or readers with the sense of the Divine presence? Not if we are content to believe that God works out His purposes through that Nature which He has made, and that the winds and the sea obey Him, combining their power for the deliverance of His people.

There are three words which describe the wonderful events recorded in the Bible; but none of them demands the sense which is commonly implied by the word miracle. The word

itself, as pointed out above, means simply a wonderful event, and if we add that the narrative is intended to make us conscious of the Divine presence, that is a sufficient interpretation of the word. The Biblical words are, first, σημεῖον, a sign; and this translation is that which has been adopted (though not quite uniformly) in the Revised Version, as, for instance, in the statement of the water turned into wine. "This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory." The second word, δύναμις, simply denotes power, or an act of power, and this also is recognized by the Revised Version, as in Mark ix. 39: "There is no man that shall do a *mighty work* in my name"; or Hebrews ii. 4: "By signs and wonders and by *manifold powers*"; and, when the word is translated "miracles," the margin says "Great *Powers*." A third word, τέρας, or wonder, like miraculum, does not prejudge the nature of these mighty works; and it seems unfortunate that, while the word "miracle" is supposed in popular language to imply an event without a cause or the action of God without any medium, it should still be used at all, for it is the source of endless confusion. When men like Hume have said that they did not believe in miracles; or when men, in a phrase which has become common in our day, say "Miracles do not happen," it is impossible to know what is meant, and endless controversy has gone on

about "miracles" without any attempt being made on either side to define the word.

But two remarks of the utmost importance must be made:—

1. In the controversies about "miracles" it has been assumed that a miracle implies a violation of the laws of nature and its uniformity; and consequently "Natural Religion" has often meant Religion which denies God's revelation of Himself, because such a revelation involves the assertion of facts which are supposed to contradict the laws by which the world is governed. The answer which has often been given to this is that we do not know all the laws of nature, and that all that can be meant by "the objector" to a "miracle" is that the fact stated is contrary to the laws of nature as we know them. This has seemed to imply that there may be exceptions; this we cannot assert. And it is certain that most of the wonders, whether of sacred or profane books, have become more natural to us. The case of the Exodus has just been touched upon. Similarly, when Herodotus reports that those who sailed round Africa declared that the sun had twice changed its course by rising on their right hand instead of their left or vice versa, he seems to be narrating a prodigy; but now the statement to us means no more than that the Phœnicians had rounded the Cape of Good Hope and had returned. In a great many cases a similar advance

of knowledge may make a "miracle" easy to believe. And our wisdom will be commonly to maintain no more than this, that a certain statement, if precisely representing the facts, is, or at least appears to be, contrary to the laws of nature so far as we know them.*

2. The other observation is this: that there is no impiety in using all our powers of judgment in ascertaining the real facts with which we are dealing. We are contending that religion and Christianity are natural, and we cannot but blame the tendency to represent occurrences as being strange, and to the ordinary understanding impossible, when the statement of them in Scripture does not demand this. For instance, the words of the poetical book of Jasher which have created perplexity and controversy, "Sun, stand thou still," have a marginal reading, "Sun, be thou silent," and may well be understood of the sun being darkened by the tremendous hail-storm which is described in the previous

* This matter is very clearly stated in the luminous work of the late Duke of Argyll, called *The Reign of Law*, at pages 14, 15: "The real difficulty lies in the idea of Will exercised without the use of means—not in the exercise of Will through means which are beyond our knowledge. Now, have we any right to say that belief in *this* is essential to all Religion? If we have not, then it is only putting, as so many other hasty sayings do put, additional difficulties in the way of Religion." "Those who believe that God's will does govern the world must believe that, ordinarily at least, He does govern it by the choice and use of means. Nor have we any certain reason to believe that He ever acts otherwise."

verse. The prose writer, who quotes from the book of Jasher, understands the words as implying an actual suspension of the sun's motion; but the tendency to turn poetry into prose is well known, and must be allowed for in scriptural as in common literature. We may notice the reverse tendency by comparing the prose statement of the passage of the Red Sea with that of the Psalms: the perfectly natural description of the prose writer that the waters became a wall (that is, a defence and a guide) to the Israelites as they crossed the uncovered sands becomes to the poet "The floods stood upright as a heap, and the waters were congealed in the heart of the sea" (Exod. xv. 8).

We must hold, then, that it is not merely a right but a duty for believers who have the capacity for such investigations to endeavour to understand the events which, with the considerations stated above, may rightly be called miracles. But in this there is no concession made to rationalism or so-called naturalism; for these systems go upon a false hypothesis. Rationalism starts from the presumption that we have a sufficient knowledge of the universe to be able to say that all narratives must be made to comply with our present experience; and "naturalism" implies that all which is not within the scope of exact science is for all practical purposes non-existent; whereas we all believe in a state into which we pass

when we die, but of which we have as yet no trustworthy experience, though faith makes it real to us; we believe also in the Divine Spirit working incessantly, by means often unknown to us, for the fulfilment of His own purposes. But, though our knowledge is very imperfect, its bounds are extended from one age to another; and, as with space, the farther we penetrate the more we are conscious of the vastness of our ignorance; we are, as Newton said, like children picking up shells on the shore, while the depths of the ocean are unexplored; and further, the scientific examination of religious experience, the knowledge of non-Christian religions, the growth of mysticism, the fuller understanding of the Bible, and the realization that our own lives are swayed not merely by our own consciousness, but by vast unknown or but partially known powers without and within us, must make us very cautious in denying what is reported to us with a fair show of honesty and capacity.

But we must add that it is a weak faith which demands wonders as its support. Our Lord discouraged it when He said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." The object of wonders is twofold: first, to arrest the attention and make the presence of God more clearly felt; but, secondly, to make us realize the constant working and indwelling of God.

The faith which depends on wonders is the childish state, and belongs to a stage of growth which is passing away. We must not limit our views by a literal adherence to the reports of men and times which knew nothing of the uniformity of nature and the constancy of law, but must learn to realize in our daily experience the presence of the Almighty Father, in the physical world, in the social world, and in that region where the two meet and act or react one on the other, in the spirit of a great teacher who said: "The curtain of the physical world is closing in upon us. What is this but that the arms of His intelligence are embracing us on every side?" *

* Professor Jowett, *Epistles of St. Paul—Essays and Dissertations*, New Edition, p. 236.

CHAPTER VI

AUTHORITY OF BIBLE, CHURCH AND CREEDS

1. The Bible

PERHAPS this may be a convenient place at which to say a word about a saying originally used by Professor Jowett, that "we must read the Scriptures like any other book." The saying falls in with the general purpose of this treatise; but what does it mean? Presumably it is a protest against unreasonable interpretations of Scripture, whether coming from Patristic sources or from more modern theories of literal inspiration. But how do we read other books? To read them aright we must not only understand words and idioms, but we must enter into the atmosphere in which the author wrote, we must know something of his age, his surroundings, the ideas and prepossession of those among whom he lived. No one would read Montaigne or Shakespeare without understanding something of the French and English history of their time and of its religion and philosophy and social movements. And no one would read the New Testament aright with-

out some knowledge of Jewish modes of thought, of the history of Rome and Greece and Judaea, of the Psalms and prophets, and, let us add, without some sense of a Divine message which the books convey to us. The equipment needed for the two literatures, sacred and profane, is different. And an illiterate man who is filled with the love of God will understand the Bible better than a clever man whose emotions have never been stirred by the longing for the Kingdom of God and the powers of the world to come. On the other hand, the Bible has its human side, and men who begin studying it simply as literature will frequently be drawn by it into the current of prophecy and of prayer.

We may shortly dispose of the subjects of inspiration and revelation which were so much agitated in a former generation, and were supposed to make the whole Bible "supernatural," and to guarantee the accuracy of all that it contains. It is no longer maintained among us that inspiration implies verbal accuracy, or that each word has some cryptic meaning different from that which it would have in other writings of the same time as the Biblical book which we are studying; or that the historical narratives are as exact as they would be in the writings of a time in which the historical conscience is awake both in the writer and in the reader. It matters little even that the writers in certain

cases took the fabric of their history from traditions outside the Jewish or Christian Church. It is the use which they made of such materials which shows their inspiration. The narrative of the Creation or the Deluge or of the Tower of Babel may have come from other writings, or from a general tradition current in Western Asia; but the lessons which, as they have come down to us, they are designed to teach are those of true religion. The story of the Creation involves five assumptions of supreme importance: (1) that the substratum of the universe and its meaning are spiritual and purposeful, chaos becoming order by the movement of the Spirit of God; (2) that the various ranges of the Creation culminate in man, and therefore that man is not, as in other systems, subject to the powers of the physical or animal world, but supreme over them; (3) that the various parts of the creation are valued by their approach to man; (4) that man is the image of God; (5) that man is a social being and the monogamic family a divine ordinance.

The present writer is by no means disposed to undervalue the germs of moral or spiritual truth to be found in non-Christian systems; he would treat them as the product of the divine Word or Spirit which is the light of every man, and would think of those who believe in them as being, in some rudimentary degree, in the

condition of many of the Old Testament characters, varying from that of Micah in the Book of Judges to that of the noblest of the Psalmists; but he would ask with confidence whether the same amount of spiritual truth could be found in any short passage of the Koran or the Vedas, or the books of the Buddhists or the Chinese, as is to be found in the first chapter of Genesis.

As to the word Revelation, although it is common to use it as a declaration of objective truth about God, in contrast with the subjective process of Inspiration, yet the two terms are practically the same. The Revelation or unveiling of God and of things divine is made through the spirit and consciousness of the inspired man; and when St. Paul desires that fresh progress may be made in the divine life, he prays that his converts "may be granted the spirit of revelation"—that is, that through their consciousness the truth concerning God may be unveiled to them and others. We none of us doubt that this unveiling has been made in a partial and evolutionary way, "by divers portions and in divers manners," or that its fullness is to be found in the life and teaching of Christ. The curious passage in one of M. Comte's books in which he says that religion is first revealed and afterwards proved by arguments has been quoted above. The divine truth first communicates itself, whether by the "inner

light," as it is called by the Society of Friends, or by statements or impressions of various kinds, to the consciousness of men, whether singly or in societies; and then they find the proofs of it in experience. The revelation or unveiling of God has come to us through men who maintained the closest fellowship with Him, so that we can believe that He spoke through them; and we find proofs of their testimony on every side. If we consider the difference of tone adopted by more "advanced" critics now and that of thirty years ago, and still more the interest shown in the Bible by writers in the popular publications of the present day, we may safely say that there has been a vast recovery of confidence in the important place of religion and of Scripture in human life.

As an instance of this, we may take the estimate of the Acts of the Apostles. Some thirty years ago, men like Zeller and the school of Baur held the field; and one of our leading historical biblicists spoke of the Acts as a very untrustworthy document. Now not only does Ramsay treat it as the authentic work of a consummate historian, but the estimate of Harnack himself is hardly less favourable. His book on Luke the Physician speaks of the Gospel and Acts together as a "great historical work," and vindicates it against its adverse critics.

It would be obviously impossible to make a

distinction between parts of the Bible which can be treated with the absolute confidence shown to it by St. Jerome or by the schoolmen or the men of the Reformation and of other parts which are subject to doubt. In some parts of even the New Testament the narrative may seem faulty; but the general fact and the lesson intended by the writer is clear and convincing. In other cases, especially in the case of the fourth Gospel, we have the noblest teaching bound up with a narrative which at least raises difficult questions. The story of the woman of Samaria may have questionable elements in it, but the words "not in this mountain nor at Jerusalem" and "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," are surely a divine revelation. The healing of the nobleman's son, if read with Western literalism, may be a difficulty; but the words, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," surely spring from a divine intelligence. The facts connected with the raising of Lazarus may, as literally told, seem doubtful, but what Christian is there to whom the words, "I am the resurrection and the life . . . he that believeth in me shall never die," do not convey the true and good news of God? Critics like Jean Réville or Loisy constantly say that this or that passage is unhistorical. Probably so, we may say, if judged by modern standards of historicity: but what

then? Is it meant that the author, whoever he was, set to work to make up a story which has no foundation? If not, then surely the duty of the critic is to endeavour to see what the substratum of truth is on which the account is grounded. And if it be asked who is to judge of this, or if it be said that when we put aside the literal accuracy we open the door to every sort of vague guess, the reply must be that the powers of discernment which we expect in a loyal critic, his knowledge of the use of words and the mode of expression among those to whom the writer belonged and for whom he wrote, must be our chief help; and that a sincere heart will do much in the way of disentangling the truth from questionable surroundings.

What the Higher Criticism* is to the learned man, the assimilating power of a divine sympathy is to the simple believer. He may, and no doubt is, often liable to mistakes; but who that reads the works of critics can deny that they also may be deceived, and that what a man asserts with confidence at one time he is obliged to correct with equal positiveness after a few years? Often common sense must

* By the Higher *Criticism* is meant not, as is often thoughtlessly supposed, a criticism made by men who pretend to have more discernment than others, but the criticism which deals with ideas and tendencies in contrast to the Lower, which is concerned with the text alone. The Higher Criticism has of late in Germany led men back in many cases to traditional views.

be called in to correct the verdicts both of scholars and theologians, as well as those both of traditional believers and of partisans.

2. Church Authority

There is, however, another power with which the inquirer has to deal: this is that which is called in a somewhat vague way Church authority. It consists in part of the affirmations of the great Councils and of the Creeds which flowed from them; in part also from a general consensus of believing men, like that which is implied in the noble words of the *Te Deum*, "The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee." A great deal of what has been said about the Bible applies to this also. But the misfortune is, first, that this authority is apt to be that of ages and institutions which are not ours, and consequently that no account is taken of the great changes which all human things have undergone; and, secondly, that Church authority has almost always meant the authority of the clergy. Consequently there is a twofold gap between the authority and those over whom it is exercised. On each of these some explanation must be given; and to each of them the principle of this treatise must be applied; Christianity must be worked out in harmony with the actual condition and needs of human life.

3. The Creeds

When it is said that the Church is our teacher, as in the current expression "The Church to teach and the Scriptures to prove," our minds almost inevitably gravitate towards the age of the great Councils where the Creeds were formed, or else to that of the Reformation when a new set of dogmas came into being. Can either of these be our guide and teacher now? Do we go to them in our teaching or in solving difficult points of conduct? Those who have been practically engaged in parochial work, or in any of the movements of thought or of Christian energy, would hardly answer Yes. The Nicene Creed, no doubt, expressed some of the great Christian principles, but in a manner suited to those imbued with Greek metaphysics; and, as has been well said, we can as little think in Greek as we can speak in Greek: the "Quicunque Vult" is the same thing translated into Latin, and drawn out into its formal consequences; the one is the creed of the Greek philosopher, the other of the Latin logician.

We have to translate these affirmations into common or natural language before they can be of use to us; and this is a process which few can accomplish successfully. Their main object is to assert the Divinity of our Lord; but it involves this in such terms as those which speak

of Him as "of one *substance* with the Father," or "begotten before all worlds"; there is nothing which tells us of His moral supremacy or assists the simple man in grasping the truth that God is love and that Christ's Sonship involves, if it is not identical with, the plain fact that he presents to us the divine love in a human life; the moral side is left out, the metaphysical is alone presented. So in the "Quicunque Vult," an assertion like that which says that Christ was God "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh" is very difficult for any but a practised theologian to reconcile with the words of St. John, "The Word was made flesh." Yet it is of such assertions, and not of anything which touches the heart and the life, that we are required to say, under penalty of eternal death, "This is the Catholic Faith." It is true that in the last verse of the Creed it is said that those who have done good will go into life everlasting; but we may well suspect that, in the minds of those who, like Clovis and his warriors, could thunder forth this or similar expressions as a kind of battle-cry, "those who have done good" meant the Catholics, and "those who have done evil" meant their Arian foes.

But it may be said, "At all events the Apostles' Creed is simple, and we can all agree upon it as a basis for religious teaching." But what does it teach? Is there anything of God's love or of

Christian goodness in it? God is the Father—but Jupiter was "Father of gods and men"—there is no moral connotation necessarily in the word. He is Maker of heaven and earth—there is nothing of His making man in His own image, loving him, saving him. Jesus Christ is the only Son—there is nothing to show that in Him we are all sons of God, nor in what sense Christ is the Son, or His *only* Son. It is not said that it is in Him we are all sons of God. Neither the descent into hell nor the resurrection of the body have any clear meaning to the mass of the people. It is said that it is the glory of the Creed that it is a mass of facts. But the power of our religion does not consist of the statement of facts, but in the spiritual meaning of the facts. And it would be well for those of the Anglican Communion who condemn Nonconformists for not caring fully enough for the Creed, and for insisting on the Bible as the great teacher, to remember what has just been said. The God of the Creed is the Maker of the world; the God of the New Testament is "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." *

* The words of Harnack put this clearly. After an eulogy upon the Creed, he says: Yet one misses all reference to His preaching, and to the image of Him as the Saviour of the poor and sick, of the publicans and sinners, the image of His personality as it shines forth in the Gospels. The Creed contains only a set of titles or headings. In this sense it is imperfect; for no confession is perfect which does not present the Saviour to the eyes of men and their hearts. (Glaubenbe kennt niss (10th Ed.) p. 34).

These remarks are made not to undervalue the compendium of facts contained in the Creed, but to combat the idea that it can be placed upon an equality with, or as a substitute for, "God's Word written," as we are taught to call the Bible. It is quite true that we can prove each statement of the Creed by the Bible; but the full teaching of the Bible can never be got out of the Creed. We may fill up the facts stated in the Creed by explanations of their spiritual bearing; but this implies that the Creed taken by itself gives us Bible facts without showing their moral and spiritual importance.

But "The Church" teaching implies a great many things besides the three Creeds. The Roman Catholic must add to it all the articles of the Creed of Pope Pius IV as sanctioned by the Council of Trent, and the new doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and the dogma that the Pope is infallible apart from any consent of the Church. The Protestant must take as his guide one of the many Confessions drawn up in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; the Anglican must accept the thirty-nine articles; the Wesleyan must be guided by John Wesley's notes on the New Testament; the simple Christian by the traditional forms in which he has been taught his religion by parents, ministers, or friends. It is true that all these systems contain much precious truth, that each is of value as a statement of the

mode in which the various branches of the Church have viewed their common inheritance; and that the matters of importance which they all have in common are more than those in which they differ. But there are two things which are far more important than them all: of these one is the Bible, the other the lives of good men. And if it is objected that the Bible was written at divers times and manners, so that some of the things that have been said about the Creeds apply to it also, the answer is that the Bible includes, as the Creeds do not, the Living centre on which all depends, the spirit of the life of Christ and His teaching. If all is viewed in relation to these we shall not go wrong.

But it may be objected that both the Bible and the Creeds are limited in their scope, while any system which professes to be in accordance with the natural development of mankind must be universal. To this we may reply, first, that we rely on the facts as truly interpreted, and that the Bible gives us the principles by which we may interpret the facts. Are we wrong in saying that the Law and the Prophets of Israel are the teachers not of one nation, but of mankind? The early narratives of the Old Testament contain, as has been pointed out above, principles which are of universal import—the unity—indeed, the spiritual unity—of the whole creation, the supremacy of man as a spiritual being,

made after the image of God, the institutions of social life, radiating from the monogamous family. The Mosaic law is distinguished from all other laws by the stress it lays upon brotherly kindness and the care for the poor, the widow, the slave, the stranger—in which it anticipates the social and political efforts of the present day. It is admitted that the revelation in the Old Testament is progressive, according to the needs of a gradually developing conscience, and the lower stages of development are necessarily and admittedly defective; but the Psalms and the Prophets gain a height of moral life which is essentially universal. Such words as "The Sacrifice of God is a broken spirit," "In offerings for sin thou hast no pleasure," "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," "I will think upon Egypt and Babylon with those that know me," "Blessed be Egypt my firstborn and Israel mine inheritance," attain the full note of universality, and prepare for the teaching of Christ and of St. Paul. The second consideration is that the general life and development of mankind is grounded on the principle of election. We do not advance with a uniform step, but those on whom some new capacity has been bestowed go forward and lead the rest. In the new theories of development this is eminently the case. There springs up, we know not how, some special form of life with a superior power of use and adaptation which causes it to live when others pass away.

However this is to be accounted for, the fact is there, and the survival of the fittest, though its supremacy may have been exaggerated, is certainly a *vera causa*. And, similarly, the consequence of the knowledge of God, of righteousness, and of immortality, comes forth—not exclusively, but supremely—in the Bible, and is destined, we cannot doubt, to impart throughout all time the guiding principles of human progress. This is the true meaning of election, which, though often both by Jew and Christian perverted into the notion of favouritism and exclusive possession, is shown in the life and teaching of Christ to be a call to labour and to suffer in a pre-eminent degree for the good of the world. We have a right, then, to claim for the Bible not that it is the exclusive organ of divine revelation, but that it is its leading and supreme expression.

And similarly, though in a far lesser degree, with the Creeds. However much we may feel that they demand explanations or a translation, not of words but of ideas, we may vindicate for them a central place as the most terse and intelligible expression of the facts to which they bear testimony, and as containing the kernel of great truths to which they act as the rind.

CHAPTER VII

JESUS. (1) HIS MESSIAHSHIP. (2) APOCALYPTIC IDEAS. BIRTH. (3) WONDERFUL WORKS. (4) RESURRECTION

1. Messiahship

BUT there are two very important points to be added, points which have of late been much discussed. The first of these is this : Are we justified in speaking of Jesus as the Messiah or Christ ? It is certain, unless the solemn testimony of the Evangelists is wrong, that He claimed the title, and accepted the expression of it by His leading disciple, and indeed drew out the confession, " Thou art the Christ." The prophecies on which this title was grounded are, indeed, less distinct than has often been supposed. Sometimes it is a blessed time which is foretold ; sometimes the ideal nation, the Servant of the Lord; sometimes warrior, or a king whose reign will be just and beneficent ; sometimes a person in whom the divine Saviour and those whose character is an image or type of His are blended together. But the mind of the Jewish Church was surely right in expecting a person in whom all the spiritual glory of these foreshadowings was gathered up ; and it is an undoubted fact that the expectation of such a person

had become a part of the Jewish faith when Jesus of Nazareth appeared. What He did with the Messiahship is comparable to what He did with the Commandments. They are transformed and transfigured by passing through the crucible of His divine conscience. "Do not kill" becomes "Do not grieve your brother by expressions of contempt, and, if he is offended, take the first step to reconciliation." "Do not steal, or covet," becomes a direction of ideal generosity. And, similarly, the Messiahship becomes no longer the expression of a king crushing his enemies with a rod of iron, but that of a meek and gentle friend who touches the conscience and the heart, and casts out falsehood, injustice and unkindness, and rules by persuasion and by love. If this leadership is the supreme moral power, how can we hesitate to accept Him as head not only of the typical nation, that of Israel, but of the whole human race, the embodiment for all men of the divine Spirit? And how can we fail to realize that the faith which takes Him as our leader unites us also to Him and gives us the power to take part in His work of redemption by drawing men to righteousness?

2. Apocalyptic Ideas

But, as has been said in a previous page, the hopes of the future form part of what has been called the apocalyptic part of divine revelation,

of the heavenly state, of the Kingdom of God, of the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. To this part of Christian teaching we must turn our attention.

We cannot expect to find as much teaching which relates to a future life as to the Kingdom of Christ in this world. Probably we should not be able to understand any exact details which might be given us. At all events, it is best for us to start with that which we can understand ; and we have to avoid the misappropriation to the future state of Bible texts which relate to God's kingdom in this world, as well as merely fanciful notions which have no real authority. Yet the curiosity of men as to what our future state is to be has naturally caused them to dwell disproportionately on the world to come. No doubt what is said is enough for us. We have also to remember that the divine principles of life must always be the same. God cannot change, nor have we any reason to think that the essentials of human nature can change ; and if we can realize the principles by which God governs the present world, we have there the best key to the world to come.

It should be remembered that the time between the Old and New Testament was the age of the Apocalypses. The Book of Daniel stands forth as the chief of them, since it was incorporated, though late and though after a long controversy,

into the canon of the Scriptures. It is in part a narrative of past events written for the encouragement of the Jews during their persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, and their great deliverance under the Maccabees. The writer then turns his attention to the future, and after setting forth the fortunes of the kingdoms with which those of Israel were intertwined, as they lay open to his spiritual insight, closes with the vision of a Kingdom of God and His saints, and with the resurrection and judgment to come. It is possible that the figurative language used in the last chapter may be translated into a description of a kingdom of Judaic righteousness. But since it is certain that in the age after the exile the Jews imbibed the hope of immortality, and that this was so completely bound up with their religion that St. Paul speaks of it as the faith "to which the twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come," we may take the expressions of those who sleep in the earth awaking and shining as the firmament as definitely relating to the eternal hope. Still, these are only the end of the long vista of human history; and those who have investigated the Apocalypses of the period of which we are speaking, consider that they form an equivalent to what is with us the philosophy of history. This is the view of Westcott * in England and of

* See article on the "Book of Daniel" in the *Dictionary of the Bible.*

Auguste Sabatier * in France; I may say also of Professor Charles at a later time. This leads us to think of the Apocalyptic portions of the New Testament as also belonging primarily to the Kingdom of God upon earth, though its principles are certainly applicable to the eternal kingdom also. It has been constantly asked whether our Lord's great prophecy of Matthew xxiv. relates to the destruction of Jerusalem or to the end of the world; and it is clear that "the end of the world" there means the end of the age or dispensation, though we may rightly apply it, as is the case with most prophecies, to great events of other times in which the same principles are involved.

The angels or messengers sent forth with a great sound of a trumpet to gather the elect from the four winds, are evidently the servants of God sent forth to proclaim the Gospel; and the appearing of our Lord and His sign in the heavens, which He declared would usher in the great changes that were to come, relate to His coming in power and in Spirit before the destruction of Jerusalem. There is one passage which may be regarded as the key for the whole of our Lord's Apocalyptic words: it is in Matthew xxvi. 63, 64, in his answer to the words addressed by Him to the High Priest: "I adjure thee," says the Priest, administering to Him the well-known form of oath, "that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ." And the reply is, "Thou hast

* *L'Apocalypse juive*—a pamphlet.

said," or, " I am," and " hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God and coming in the clouds of heaven." The word " hereafter " here (ἀπ' ἄρτι) is used (Authorized Version of the Bible) in the sense which it bears in the English of the sixteenth century (as in the familiar sentence " that we may *hereafter* live a godly life," that is, from this time forward), and it stands in the Revised Version " henceforth." The declaration of our Lord is therefore, " From this time forward you shall see me sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." The Authorized Version appears to Englishmen of our time to make an assertion which is most misleading. But the full force of the true reading (" from this time forth ") seems not to have been recognized. No one can suppose that Christ, being at the mercy of His judges, or, rather, His murderers, meant to say that from this time forward he would be seen sitting on a throne at God's right hand, or in a cloud in heaven, for such an assertion would in a few hours have been shown to be false. We are driven necessarily to give the words a spiritual sense: " From this time you will be conscious of a spiritual power which you will needs recognize as divine, clothed with God's authority, like that of the vizier at the right hand of an earthly king, and surrounded by a cloud," a figure which (as in the words of Daniel, " One like the son of man came with a cloud," and in

the conception of both Jews and Gentiles, as in the words of Horace, "Nube candentes humeros amictus") implied the presence of divine power. This power, no doubt, the wretched men who sat on the judgment seat even then began to feel; and when our Lord came again on the day of Pentecost, that power was felt by three thousand men on whom the guilt of the crucifixion rested. This was also the mode of His coming as promised in the discourse at the supper table ("I will come again and receive you to myself"). And it assumed another aspect in the fall of Jerusalem, to which St. Paul's prophetic words must be applied: "The revelation of the Lord Jesus, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God" (2 Thess. i. 8).

If we follow out what has now been said, a new light is thrown by it upon two very important points: first, What is meant by the coming of Christ? and, secondly, Did Christ Himself and His apostles expect that this coming would take place literally and externally within their own generation? To which we may add the question, What are we to expect in accordance with the Creeds as to what we term the Second Advent?

1. If the coming of Christ be (it must be that, whatever further it may be) a coming in Spirit and in power, then it is a continuous coming, the coming of the Redeemer to take possession of the world which He has won by the cross. The asser-

tion of it before the Transfiguration implies an anticipatory vision of the time when Christ's glory will break forth in its spiritual splendour before the whole world. The later assertion (Mark xiv. 30) that "this generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled," needs to be interpreted, like so many similar cases of the fulfilment of prophecy, as meaning, "These principles will receive a fulfilment in the destruction of Jerusalem," but not as implying an exhaustion of their meaning. These cases are instances of the memorable words of Lord Bacon, that "Divine prophecy being of the nature of its author, with whom a thousand years are as one day, is not restricted to any one fulfilment, but contains in itself springing and germinal fulfilments, though its completion may belong to a single event." Christ comes to individuals, to cities, to nations; He comes in blessing or in judgment; He comes in various phases of human progress; He will at last be manifested in such a way that all men must see and acknowledge Him as divine: "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him."

If this be true, we have an answer to our question. Christ did not only expect to return in that generation, but His expectations were fulfilled; and the expectation was shared by the early disciples, and was fulfilled to them. But this return was to be, and was, a return in spirit and in power. Their expectations were an instance of the per-

spective of prophecy; that is, that, as a distant scene appears sometimes near and sometimes far, and any report which may be given of it depends largely upon the disposition of the beholder, so the prophets and the faithful have viewed the great consummation. Christian faith must be satisfied under present conditions with the assurance that the Spirit of Christ and communion with Him is the supreme power in the life of mankind, which must gather into itself whatever of truth or spiritual energy at present exists, and eventually rule over what St. Paul speaks of as "all principalities and powers"; and that He, whether in outward form or inward presence, but certainly recognized and understood, will be Lord of all.

In all this there is nothing but what is in harmony with the development of human life and experience. But an attempt is apparently being made to reproduce the Apocalyptic notions in their literal form as suited to the ignorant, or to those who cling to the elements of strangeness in Christianity, and in some cases to use this false literalism to support the element of mystery in church ceremonies. To what extent a connection may exist between the ministrations of the Church and the eternal world may be a proper subject of discussion. But when men have reached the stage at which reason rather than imagination is required for religious progress, or at least that

the imaginations of an age of childhood need to be supported by manly reason if they are to abide, it is evidently of supreme importance that they should not be slaves to the letter, but should be able to interpret the words in which religion has come down to us by means of their counterparts in ordinary life. This is the meaning of Natural Christianity.

3. The Virgin Birth

But, coming now to the facts of our Saviour's life, we are met at once by that which, we cannot deny, has in this age of scientific inquiry been a stumbling-block to many who are true Christians—the story of His birth from a Virgin. We cannot turn aside from this in a treatise like the present; yet it is difficult to enter into it without some sense of irreverence. There is need for sympathy and forbearance on both sides; nor can we think it right that those who doubt should by a harsh dogmatism be driven out from Christian communion or ministry. But it seems evident that the denial of the facts as narrated in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke is not demanded either by criticism of the documents or by modern science.

We may take St. Luke as a most careful and critical writer. He tells us in a Preface, the style and manner of which attest its truthfulness, that he had "traced the course of all things accurately

from the first." The authority of his writings has passed through the ordeal of German controversy, and the greatest of German scholars begins his work on "St. Luke, the physician," by speaking of "the great historical work which has come down to us in two parts, the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles." St. Luke had had the opportunity, when in Palestine for two years during St. Paul's imprisonment, of making inquiries for himself; and, although the portion (Luke i. 3–ii. 40) bears the stamp of a simple idyll with a style of its own incorporated by him between a critical Preface and a series of accounts written in almost classical Greek, yet the fact of its incorporation gives it his authority.

It is true that the event narrated is unique; but the coming of Christ into the world is the coming of the one Supreme personality into human life; and, unless modern science can tell us, first, the measure of the action of the Eternal and creative principle of life upon the human soul, and, secondly, that of the human soul upon the body, it cannot pronounce the account of the birth of Christ to be incredible. But it does not attempt this. Its witness is rather to the opposite effect.* We may, therefore,

* Darwin, *Plants and Animals under Domestication*, II, page 354; "From the several foregoing considerations we may conclude that the difference between sexual and asexual generation is not nearly so great as at first appears"; page 337: "Sexual and asexual reproduction are thus seen not to differ essentially; and we have already shown that sexual repro-

refuse to be drawn into denial or the supposition of a mythical story when we read the account given by St. Luke, and may not feel that we are doing violence to the God who reveals Himself in modern investigations when we read in all their simplicity the solemn words of the Gospel; "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Nevertheless, we must consider the testimony of Scripture on the other side. The words of Isaiah, said by St. Matthew to have been fulfilled, must be taken, like so many others which assert the fulfilment of prophecy, as meaning, "This is an in-

duction, the power of re-growth, and development, are all parts of one and the same great law." Duke of Argyll, *Reign of Law*, page 229: "Mr. Darwin's theory gives an explanation, not of the processes by which new forms appear, but only of the processes by which, when they have appeared, they acquire a preference over others."

Professor Loeb, of Chicago (in the *Centenary Book of Essays*, published at Cambridge for the centenary of Charles Darwin's birth in 1909), p. 250, gives instances in which, in certain orders of living beings, virgin births have followed even upon artificial stimulation. Any one desiring to follow out further this side of the matter, may be referred to a short treatise entitled, *How Shall This Be? or, the Nature of the Virgin Birth*, by the Rev. E. H. Archer-Shepherd, Vicar of Avenbury, Herefordshire. (Rivingtons, 34, Covent Garden.)

At the time when some stir was caused by a misreport of a part of the present treatise, which had been prepared with a view to private discussion, the author received a letter from a well-known military man on the subject. He had some years before in a distant colony been in company with two gentlemen engaged in botanical researches. In the course of

stance or parallel case," in this instance the assurance given by the birth and name of the child "God with us."* Plain honesty requires us to admit that outside the two first chapters of St. Matthew and the two first of St. Luke, it is absolutely non-existent in the New Testament. The genealogies of our Saviour are those of Joseph, not of Mary; Jesus was known by His first disciples (John I. 45) as the son of Joseph. The mode of His birth is never appealed to by the Apostles, though there are many occasions on which it might have been introduced, and though all the chief events of the Saviour's life—His birth, His circumcision, His works of mercy and of power, His temptation, His agony, His trial by Pilate, His death, resurrection, and ascension—are used to enforce their teaching; and the natural inference is that it was unknown to the writers of the New Testament, except to those who penned those chapters of the first and third Gospel; or that, if known to them, it was

conversation some remarks were made on the Gospel history, and he said to them that he supposed that many things in it appeared incredible to them, especially the Virgin birth of our Lord; but both of them replied that the effect of their researches had been the contrary to that which he had assumed: they had met with so many cases of parthenogenesis that they could not on scientific grounds refuse credence to the account given by the two evangelists.

* "Behold, a virgin shall conceive," etc. (Isa. vii. 14) means "One who is now a virgin shall be married and bear a son; and before this child shall be old enough to discern good from bad, the kings of Syria and Samaria, whom you dread, shall pass away. This will be a sign that God is with you, and the child shall be called Immanuel as a token of this assurance."

accounted by them (as it must be to us), as quite insignificant as a mark of the Incarnation in comparison with the witness of the life and moral personality of our Lord. We may add that Athanasius in his treatise on the *Incarnation of the Word* gives no doctrinal importance to it, although he was writing only a few years before the Nicene Council, in which he took so prominent a part, and at which all that bears on our Lord's Divinity was of prime importance. On the other hand, the simplicity of the narrative of St. Luke, the lovely idylls of the manger-bed, of the shepherds and the angels, of the presentation in the Temple, of Simeon and Anna, and of the boyhood at Nazareth, make the thought of an invention of the whole story repugnant to every Christian sentiment, we may venture even to say, repugnant to every intelligence which can take in the subject in all its aspects.

What, then, is the result of these facts to us? Evidently, that the details of our Lord's birth are recorded for reverent meditation, not for dogmatic assertion or public proclamation. It is one thing to refuse to deny the recorded facts; it is another to put them into a creed for use of the congregation, and yet another to take an article out of its place and make it the matter on which our whole faith hangs, and still another to drive out those to whom it seems dubious, and who may not unjustly say, "The testimony of Scripture taken as a whole is not such as to compel our belief."

It stands, no doubt, in our Creeds; but it certainly formed no part of the Creed of Nicea; and Harnack seems to have proved that at Rome the Apostles' or Roman Creed which contained this article was superseded by the Nicene * until well on in the eighth century, when the "Apostles' Creed" came back from Gaul with this and other additions, and spread from Rome throughout the West. There are two articles of this Creed†—the words "descended into hell" and "the Resurrection of the body"—which we treat almost exactly in the manner in which it seems that the Virgin birth should be treated. The descent into hell was at one time the most practically influential of all articles in the Creed. At the end of the Middle Ages the belief in the *descensus ad inferos,*

* Harnack says "Nicene (Constantinopolitan)"; but the Council of Constantinople formulated no creed, and the additions to the Nicene Creed are of inferior authority. The Council of Constantinople was repudiated both by Rome and by Egypt, and Cyril (450) quoted only the Nicene Creed in his polemics against Nestorius (431)

† *Das Apostolishe Glaubensbe kennt niss* (10th Ed.), pp. 13–15. It is to be remarked that these two clauses of the Creed which are without any known conciliar authority gradually gained their supreme importance about the time when the movements arose (1) for the excessive value of virginity, and (2) for the cult of the relics of the dead, the former of these being introduced by the hermits who came to Rome with Athanasius in 346. The ideas and practices connected with these additions to the Creed were resisted by Jovinian, Helvidius and Vigilantius; but these protesters were crushed by the great authority of St. Jerome, and monachism, mariolatry and purgatory dominated the mind of the Church for more than a thousand years.

accompanied as it was by the belief in purgatory and the treasury of merit, occupied men's minds supremely, and drew forth boundless efforts for the erection and maintenance of chantries and the endowment of offices for the liberation of suffering souls. But now we hardly give a thought to it; and, whether we adopt Pearson's view that it means no more than that the soul of our Lord "was conveyed into such receptacles as the souls of other persons used to be," or whether we have any theory as to the place of departed spirits, we are free to give our opinion, if we have formed one, but not to call men heretics who have another opinion. Similarly, we must treat the Resurrection of the body, which was fiercely debated in the fourth century between the Origenists and men like St. Jerome. No one now would hold what was then the orthodox and victorious opinion that the physical particles which are buried will be gathered again to form our resurrection bodies. We know them to have been scattered, and in many cases to enter into the composition of other organisms; and we are content to believe in the persistence of the personality without trying to define the nature of that "house not made with hands" into which it passes. In a similar way we may expect that the next generation will deal with the Virgin birth, allowing for various modes of treating the accounts.

4. The Miracles

But what, it is often said, is the use of explaining by natural causes a single "miracle," when the Bible is full of miracles? It is not pretended that everything can be explained. We must beware equally of the dogmatism which refuses to discuss or inquire and of that other dogmatism which contemptuously rejects all that it cannot explain. Something has already been said on this subject earlier in this treatise, and it was pointed out that the modern idea of a miracle is that of an effect without a cause, of the Divine will acting without any medium, which is never asserted in the Bible. Indeed, how could such a conception of a miracle be present to the minds of men who had no notion of the uniformity of nature? And the fact that this notion of uniformity, which is the basis of all modern conceptions of nature, was absent from the mind of the scriptural writers should make us slow to take their statements in an exact literal sense. For instance, when Eutychus fell from the loft and was taken up dead, and St. Paul bent over him and said, "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him," is it not certain that the difference between unconsciousness and actual death was not present to St. Luke who recorded the facts? And is it not possible that a similar account may be given of the other instances of raising the

dead? Is it irreverent even to believe that our Lord Himself, whose knowledge was limited by that of his age, could not have made the distinction between what modern science would recognize as death, with its instantaneous commencement of decay, and the many forms of swooning, of syncope and of hysteria, which sometimes deceive the wisest of modern times? We must remember that the criteria and language of the East differ from that of the West, and the mode of narration of the first century from that of our own day. Human nature itself has in many respects changed. A case of the burial of a man in the Punjab and his resuscitation after six weeks was guaranteed by English eye-witnesses of the highest credit, and reported by the late Sir Monier Williams. It is even said by some of those who are conversant with the East, that no man would be thought anything of as a religious leader who did not, in the estimation of his followers, raise the dead; and we may believe that when our Lord bade His apostles "heal the sick and raise the dead," as if the two things were on the same plane of possibility, He was speaking of a process very different from what in scientific days would be implied by raising a dead body to life.

Everyone in the present day is willing to admit a natural cause in the acts of healing recorded in the Gospels; and we feel that, far from being a disparagement of the divine power dwelling in

our Saviour, it is a fresh witness for it. Some may say that such an explanation brings the work of Christ down to a level with that of Vespasian, as recorded by Tacitus, when lame men at his presence recovered their strength. But it seems much truer to argue: If the impression of a great imperial presence could work upon a palsied or hysterical frame, the impression made by the supreme personality of Christ upon the weakened souls and bodies of men is a witness to the higher power of righteousness and love which was in Him. We are justified in laying stress on the words so often used by our Saviour, "Thy faith hath saved thee," and to apply them both to bodily and to spiritual rehabilitation. Especially is this the case in reference to demoniacal possession and its cure, which is attested all through the early Church, and again and again by Saint Jerome as an eye-witness in the end of the fourth century, and of which instances are recorded even in the present day. The enfeebled frame which has become a prey to violent uncontrollable impulses is wrought upon, and its truer life drawn forth, by the serene majesty of the Christ and His followers. It must, of course, be admitted that some of the records of the Gospels, if taken literally, are contrary to the course of nature as we know it; but they are few. The water turned to wine; the multiplication of loaves and fishes; the walking on the water; the stilling of the tempest.

No man can explain every statement such as these are, and, as has been argued above, we cannot suppose that we know the limits of what is possible. Nevertheless, criticism has its claims. The witnesses were predisposed to expect wonders in their religious leaders; Oriental hyperbole must be allowed its part; and the reports must have passed through several hands before they reached their present form.

It is also to be observed that the narratives of events which seem contrary to ascertained law are almost wholly to be found in Asia, where the mental constitution was far less scientific, and there seems to have been an enfeeblement of the nervous organization of men in New Testament times. Hardly any such events are reported after St. Paul's passage into Europe. The restoration of the Pythoness at Philippi to her reason, and the healing of the father of Publius and others at Melita, may have been exceptions to this, but they are the only ones. If we read consecutively the 16th to 18th chapters of the Acts, which describe St. Paul's journey in the Greek cities, and then pass on to the 19th, and its narrative of his work at Ephesus with its curious arts and the spirits whom the seven sons of the sons of Sceva the Jew could not cast out, with handkerchiefs and aprons carried from the person of St. Paul to the sick and effecting their cure, and with the wild fanaticism of the worshippers of Diana, we cannot

but be struck with the contrast between East and West. St. Paul, indeed, speaks of the δυνάμεις and χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων as exercised in Corinth: but they come quite naturally between "teachers" and "helps" and "governments." It is inconceivable that he should have made this collocation if he had meant to describe, separated only by a comma, plain functions of human life-like teaching and a stupendous breach of the laws of the universe. It is not, however, necessary that we should understand the process of causation in dealing with each event, especially with things belonging to ages so distant and so different from our own. It is commonly said that, if we knew the whole process, we should see that all was subject to law; and we ought to give due weight to the argument relied upon by a man of so much authority as the late Duke of Argyll in his *Reign of Law* (p. 15), that unexpected results may follow from the manipulation of the ordinary facts and laws by a higher intelligence, just as the vital power in us enables us to raise our limbs in apparent contravention of the law of gravitation.

5. The Resurrection

Ought we then to think of the Resurrection as a violation of natural law? Rather, as a clear intimation to us of a sphere of existence of which our present faculties cannot judge. It is not the resuscitation of a corpse, and in this it was

entirely different from the restoration to life of Lazarus or Eutychus. The resurrection of our Lord was the revelation of one who has passed into another state of existence. Lazarus died again and returned to corruption, but "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Rom. vi. 9). St. Paul, the earliest direct testifier to the Resurrection, identifies the appearances to the other apostles with the "Heavenly Vision" given to him at his conversion.* He also identifies it with the general belief in the resurrection of the dead, which was the faith of "the twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night." † The preaching of the Resurrection in later times has not made this distinction between a resuscitation, or return under mortal conditions, and a spiritual existence (the "spiritual body" of which St. Paul speaks (1 Cor. xv. 44)). But two expressions of Bishop Horsley's published a century ago ‡ may be quoted: "The tomb was not opened to let the Saviour out, but to let the women in," and "The accounts all show that He was invisible save to the eye of faith." A curious question of Bishop Westcott's may also be men-

* 1 Corinthians xv. 3–8.

† Acts xxvi. 6, 7.

‡ "Sermons on the nature of the evidence by which the fact of our Lord's resurrection is established: by Samuel Horsley, late Bishop of St. Asaph," published 1810, pp. 167, 202, 204–5, 208. A very remarkable work, as anticipating in a large measure the results of modern inquiry.

tioned : " If our Lord was under mortal conditions when He appeared after His resurrection, with what garments was He clad ? "

I may notice a remarkable speculation of the late Bishop Harvey Goodwin on the appearances of persons after death to their friends, though he refused to apply it to the Resurrection. He was a student of optics, and he observed that the usual course of perception began with the impression of the object seen upon the retina, thence passing from the retina to the optic nerve, and thence again to the conscious personality of the person seeing. May we not (so he argued) think of the process as reversed in the case of visions or appearances—the impression being made first on the mental or spiritual organs of personality, thence passing on to the optic nerve, then to the retina, and thence projected on to the outer sphere ? If we carry this possibility a little further, it would mean that the soul of the living man was in contact with one in the spirit-world, and that, by the process just described, the vision which was primarily a spiritual one was also made outward, visible, and real.

This might, if the process can be proved to be real, be applied without impropriety to account for the phenomena of the Resurrection. It would be in harmony with the promises made by our Lord at the supper-table of His re-appearance to His faithful disciples. " I will not leave you

comfortless, I will come unto you." It would not be a fanciful thing, as the use of the word "vision" might suggest to some persons, but the real contact of the spiritual personality in the other world with the spirit of the person to whom the vision came in this world. It may be said that, when we speak of a spiritual existence, we are going into the region of the supernatural. But this must depend on the question whether we give to the words "nature" and "natural" the extension advocated in the first lines of this treatise. When we speak of the mind or affections as distinct from the bodily frame, we go beyond the sphere of the senses. Why then should we stop there? Our belief in God as the eternal energy, or as the supreme goodness, is one to which our reason ascends by induction; and our own personality and its relation to God are the primary ground of our belief in immortality. We cannot explain the world, whether material or biological or moral, without the hypothesis of God's existence; nor can we explain human nature with its hope and trust and longing for the ideal and for social perfection without the hypothesis of a spiritual world and of immortality. We pass by necessary steps from the material to the spiritual and the eternal; and if our original contention be true that the proper idea of nature is nature in its highest form, then God and the spiritual world are in the fullest sense natural.

In any case, however we may conceive of the state of our Lord during the interval between the moments of Easter and Ascension, the witnesses of those "to whom He showed Himself alive after His Passion" are sufficient to assure us of His triumphal existence beyond the grave, which has "brought life and immortality to light" for all mankind.

6. Our Lord's Divinity

Before leaving the question of the wonderful works of Christ, it must again be asserted that the contention that the belief that in almost all cases (perhaps in all) they had a natural and intelligible cause does not destroy their value as evidences of His being truly the Christ and the Son of God. The frequency of their occurrence (see Matthew xi. 3–6) and their connection with His Messianic redemptive power (Luke iv.) harmonize with the belief in His divine nature, though the main proof of this will always lie in His character and teaching.

And from this it follows that, when we speak of the divine nature of Christ, a large part of the difficulty of explaining the assertion of the two natures blended into one is removed. We might, indeed, invoke the words of the "Quicunque Vult": "As the reasonable soul and flesh in one man, so God and man is one Christ." The union of soul and body, though we cannot explain it, is natural; why then should the

union of God and man be thought of as non-natural? So long as God was thought of as not merely separable in idea, but actually and permanently separated from the world and mankind, so long the old insoluble disputes were bound to continue—insoluble, we venture to say, because the denial of our Lord's divinity called on us to bow down to something less than the Highest, while its confession led in its final development to the notion, which sounds like a *reductio ad absurdum*, though it was held by such men as Westcott, that Christ had no human personality. If that were true, does not the whole idea of the Incarnation become unreal, and our Lord a mere phantasm? But we are saved from this by the belief in the immanence of God. If God be in all His works, if He be the evolving power which has worked upwards from the beginning, then each portion of the Creation is endued with a share of divinity, and man who is capable of conceiving of God and knowing Him has the chief share in it. It is this, and not the special manner of Christ's coming into human life, that St. Athanasius puts forward in his great argument in his work *De Incarnatione Verbi*. This is no more than the witness of Scripture which speaks of the Spirit of God as the creative agent, and of "the seven Spirits of God" as "sent forth throughout all the earth." Then, when Christ appears as the head of the human race, He is supremely, absolutely possessed by this

Divine Spirit. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." Or, to put it in another way, equally Scriptural: The Word which was with God and was God, was the light of every man, and took human form completely in the person of Christ. Christ, so far from being a non-natural being, is the most truly natural of all men, because He draws out, in Himself, to perfection that nature which in the rest of us is stunted. We must think of the Spirit of God struggling upwards through the whole Creation and fulfilling Himself at last in the one perfect Man—"the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all Creation" (Col. i. 15, R.V.).

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES IN NATURAL TERMS

WE may now touch briefly upon a few of the most notable Christian doctrines, those which have seemed most difficult and have provoked most controversy, though they are expressions of truth which may be properly called natural.

1. The Atonement. The object of Redemption is to restore man to his natural and proper condition. Sin is degradation, an act of atavism, which falls backwards into animalism instead of rising to glory and honour: an act of selfishness which narrows us instead of the expansion by which we attain to universal love. But the life of Christ and the death in which it culminated—"Now is the Son of Man glorified," as He exclaimed when He entered on His Passion—has the attractive power which He described in the words, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." This attraction is in perfect consistency with the laws of the moral affections. Self-devotion is attractive to us all; and so is love, and so is the truth which shows itself in equity and the just balance of mind. And when these three

are perfectly blended, as they are in the death of our Saviour, they have a matchless power over the human spirit. This forms the true basis for the doctrine of the Atonement, which is a reconciliation of heart and will to God by the moral power of the Cross.* And this also gives a true basis to the expressions of piety, which dwell so specifically on the blood of Christ.

2. The doctrine of Election. So long as this was conceived as the arbitrary choice of certain men to exclusive happiness, it was unnatural and immoral. But if we follow the teaching of St. Paul that we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. viii. 29), the doctrine is the expression of simple fact, namely, that special spiritual endowments are given (we know not how) to certain individuals and races; but that, as in Natural Selection certain peculiar excellences, at present unaccountable, become the parents of all progress, so these endowments are given to men not in order that they may attain personal happiness or eminence, but that, being like Christ, they may work and suffer for mankind. We are not chosen that we may sit on the right or left of a king, but that we may approach to the image of the great Sufferer and Saviour.

3. The doctrine of Absolution. It is a law of the

* This will be found expanded in Part IV of this treatise, p. 163.

spiritual life that the true penitent is absolved: but also that the assurance of forgiveness by one who has spiritual insight is an uplifting power to us. The public declaration of this is rightly committed to those who preside over our prayers and our Christian teaching; but the private conveyance of it to individuals must depend on the acknowledged spiritual power of the person conveying it, which may be by declaration or by manifestation of sympathy. So far as the clergy are felt to have this insight, as they ought to have, they naturally take the lead in conveying the healing message; but there is nothing to restrict it to them. As a plain matter of fact, it is conveyed in many different ways by persons of many different conditions. Sir Thomas More said that, in Utopia, every one was free to choose his confessor among priests or laymen, among men or women.

4. The doctrine of Episcopacy. Is it not a plain social law that everywhere there must be one head—in an army, an assembly, a commercial company, a municipality, a state? And is not this a much stronger ground on which to stand than a supposed command of our Lord, or a special institution enjoined by Him? History shows that the Episcopate only gradually, in the course of ages, and by adaptation to changing needs, reached its present form. But the social needs of mankind are an ordinance of God, and there-

fore we may justly speak of Episcopacy as divine: but we must gladly admit the principle (even if, we may think, in diminished potency) in the Presbyterian or Congregational systems, in the persons of Moderators or Presidents or the recognized heads of bodies of worshippers. We may further extend this view as the sacredness which has been attributed to public worship comes to be extended to all acts which are done in the name of Christ. The leaders of men in all departments will be, whether so named or not, the Bishops of the Church of the future.

We might go on, did space allow, through the whole range of Christian doctrines; but it may be hoped that these instances, though briefly given, may suffice to indicate the possibility, and the advantage, of treating matters of doctrine according to the ascertained principles of the nature of man as a spiritual being in contact with the Divine nature, which is made human to us through "the man Christ Jesus." But it is more important in a short and imperfect sketch of a Natural Christianity, to turn to the practical side, and to show how important the views which have been here expressed are in their bearing on the Christian life, both individual and social.

5. Practical Christianity. If what has been said of Redemption and Atonement be true, then the great change effected by Christianity in the individual is one entirely according to the course of

nature. We cannot bind human nature to one process. Like the Spirit of God, " it bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." Some men are acted upon rapidly, some slowly. With some, Christian ordinances have the greatest power, with others silent meditation: sometimes men move in masses, sometimes in units. But the highest moral power is always at work, and affects all men. Consequently, it is impossible to trace any absolute line between men such as is spoken of as conversion or regeneration. That such a change passes over men in various ways every student of the spiritual life must admit. But that we can always recognize it is by no means true. A hopeful man will see signs of it, and presages of the final victory of good over evil, almost everywhere. Nor is it necessary that religion should express itself in strange and strained words or practices. The simplest words which express affection or self-denial or aspirations after good are best. But, on the other hand, we must recognize Christian influences and Christian experience as part of the natural life, not to be turned from in ordinary conversation or in scientific inquiry. And, further, practices such as asceticism, which denaturalize human life, unless adopted, as they were by St. Paul, for the good of mankind during " the present distress," must be inconsistent with the principle we are upholding. Any mode of action, of course,

which will further the objects of piety, or of doing good to others, or aid in establishing the Kingdom of God, may be embraced readily; but not for its own sake. The common or natural life—what our Lord spoke of as "eating and drinking"—is God's will for us, with the exception just made. The Christian life is the ordinary life of human goodness, sublimated and raised to its highest power by the Spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH. HUMAN SOCIETY TURNED CHRISTIAN

AND similarly, in speaking of the Christian Society or Church, we may say that it is simply human society transformed by the Spirit of Christ. Our Lord Himself was a loyal member of the Jewish nation, and His own first endeavour, as also that of His apostles, was to infuse His own spirit into the nation—" to gather the children of Jerusalem under His wings." Only when they showed that " they would not " did He take the momentous step of founding a separate Society. But His invitation to the Jewish people was repeated at Pentecost according to His last injunctions. " The promise is unto you and your children "—" Ye are the children of the prophets " —" To you first God hath sent Jesus Christ to bless you."

Think what would have been the result if this invitation had been accepted. The Jewish nation would have become the first Christian Church. And this we may rightly consider to be the normal or natural condition of things under the Christian

dispensation, each human institution, by accepting the divine principle of life, becoming a part of the Church—the family first, "The Church which is in thy house"; then the social circle, as represented by the early Churches in the Roman cities; then the Christian nation and the Empire. The attempt made by Theodosius and Gratian to make the Empire one vast Church, though it may have been premature, was in the right direction. The condition of things established for more than a thousand years in England is, we may feel sure, the highest type of the Church, where the nation as a whole, with all its powers, acts as a Christian Church; where, as in our Bidding Prayer, or in our prayer for the Church Militant, we take in, as integral parts of the Church, the Sovereign, the nobles, the magistrates, the clergy, the Parliament, and all orders and degrees of men in their several stations, praying that they may all work together for one end, the end of Christian righteousness, and assist each other in fulfilling it. It is, no doubt, as St. Paul said * of the Church of his day, "a great house," in which there are vessels of gold and silver, of wood and of brass; and in which discipline must be exercised (as it is by our laws), "for the punishment of wickedness and vice," a school in which each individual may rise by good training from class to class. By no other system than by this inclusive and *natural*

* 2 Tim. ii. 20.

one can we ensure that all the moral forces of the nation shall work, not in antagonism but in unity, to convert human society into the Kingdom of God.

It remains, therefore, to speak of the Church as the institution by which religion operates upon mankind. It is here most of all that we need to maintain the naturalness of Christianity, because, if the Church as the organ of the divine life is an exotic element always kept apart from the free development of mankind, and either dominant over it or contending with it for the mastery, it is evident that the two systems will clash continually, and that an unworthy representation of truth and of morality will be presented to men, arousing their contempt or their animosity. It is the chief object of this treatise to show that these evils are needless. Unity and universality must be the characteristics of that which is divine.

Church writers and workers are apt to form their conceptions upon too narrow a basis, and to take their ideas of the Church and its functions from too late a period. And secular writers and actors are apt to accept the estimate thus formed as inevitable or even as axiomatic. But when this is done a wrong direction is taken, and, for the most part, if we ask the question, What are you speaking of when you use the word Church? the answer, if given truly, must be simply, The Clergy. The mass of mankind

do not count, and whatever lay element exists is there only by consent of the clergy and on terms dictated by them. If any one will take the pains to read a few pages in any book or newspaper treating of these subjects, and note the passages in which the word Church occurs, they will find that the things attributed to " the Church " are really the acts of the clergy and their special adherents. This is not said invidiously, as if the clergy had some evil or selfish motive. It is the fault of a wrong assumption, that the main, or even sole object of the Church is public worship with its immediate adjuncts, a sphere in which the clergy must necessarily be predominant.

St. Paul defines the Church as " The body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." The universality of the Church is here proclaimed; and, when we set before us the declarations that " Christ, the true light, lighteth every man," that " all things consist or stand fast through Him," * and remember that our Lord reproached His disciples for forbidding those who " followed not with them," while showing faith in His name, that St. Paul made it his chief teaching that it is faith as contrasted with ordinances which saves, we cannot but believe that the single thing which our Lord regarded as important was the devotion of the heart, and that, whatever ordinances were established among his followers, He would regard

* Col. i. 17.

as of secondary importance, and would not wish them to be the means of excluding any who loved and followed Him. It is said, indeed, that He founded the two Sacraments: but how different is His treatment of them from the use made of them in later times! Baptism was an ordinance of the Jews: proselytes, Essenes, the disciples of John, were baptized. It was held that all Israel had undergone baptism at Sinai, and that therefore their children did not need it. Our Lord, no doubt, allowed its use in the formation of that which was at the time a new Jewish sect, but the tradition, if not the record itself, says significantly that "Jesus baptized not, but His disciples."* And St. Paul, though he uses the symbolism of baptism to enforce the renunciation and faith needed in Christians, yet marks emphatically the superiority of his office as a proclaimer of the Gospel over that of the administrator of the sacrament.† Logicians find everywhere a class of things which they call "inseparable accidents"—that is, things which necessarily accompany ideas in order to give them visible embodiment, but are only to be esteemed as helps to our consciousness of the mental or spiritual reality; and we may say that both our Lord and St. Paul treated the Sacraments as amongst this class. They are privileges which it would be strange indeed to neglect; but, if it is said that the act of baptism is to be

* John iv. 2. † Cor. i. 13–17.

enforced under penalty of everlasting death, the Sect which refuses the ordinance stands there to refute us. We might almost think that God had provided the community of Friends as a protest against such a doctrine. Our Lord would surely, even if He had given a more emphatic command, have considered the exaggerations and false teaching which had caused such a protest as good reason for counting their faith for righteousness apart from the law. And the same may be said in reference to the Lord's Supper, which was the Jewish Passover appropriated by our Lord as a memorial of His death. It is certainly a strange thing for any believer to refuse this ordinance ; but we have to admit that the controversies and superstitions which have gathered round it have been among the main causes which have driven believers away ; and there are certainly instances known to the present writer in which very earnest and capable men have felt that they served God better by abstaining than by partaking of an ordinance which had been so much denaturalized.

We may say then that, though the participation in the Sacraments is a high privilege, and is, speaking generally, the mark of those who believe, yet that it is contrary to the genius of our religion to frame these acts into a peremptory and exclusive law. The Church of Christ has no formal bounds. We are taught to say " Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity " ; and,

looking even further, as our age is bound to do, "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." One of the most competent men known to the author has said: The Church of Christ has a centre, but no circumference.

But if we have no formal boundaries to the Church, but look upon it as, according to the words above quoted, "the fullness of Him who filleth all in all," * and as bearing to ordinary men or societies a similar relation to that which men of genius bear to the ordinary workers in the same sphere, what difference, it may be asked, is there between it and the world or human society generally? There are several considerations which we must bear in mind before we answer this question. The first thing is to set before us the object for which the Church exists. The nature and bounds of each society are best seen when we realize what its purpose is. If then we consider the Church as existing for the purpose of making God as revealed to us in Christ, and His saving health, known to mankind, and thus to establish His Kingdom by making Him truly Lord over all, we must recognize all who are engaged in this work as forming part of the Church. And further, if we believe that the redemption wrought by Christ is universal and is destined to include the whole human race, we must

* Eph. i. 23.

look on the whole world and every person in it as potentially a part of the body which is to bring about this result. In the later Epistles of St. Paul (those of the Captivity) which deal with this subject, and in which he may have been aided in working out his convictions by the spectacle of the vast unity of the Roman Empire, the purpose of God is described in these words: "That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He may sum up all things in Christ"; * and the instrument by which this is to be effected is the Church, "which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" the full body, as the Apostle exclaims, of Him by whom the whole world stands fast, and by whom and for whom all things are created. We must conceive, then, of every person and thing in the world as having some place in this great scheme, some portion in building up the Kingdom of God.

If, further. the question is asked, How can the things or persons who are valid members of this body be marked off from those which are only potentially so, the answer is that they are marked off by the will to work in the joint cause, and by a certain understanding of its purpose. None who wish sincerely to contribute to the building up of God's Kingdom of righteousness can justly be rejected. The whole human race is one great brotherhood with a common purpose of which it becomes more

* Eph. i. 10.

and more conscious. We have worked toward it as yet only partially, and by means of disjointed efforts. We must work in the future with unity and conscious purpose. And if it is further asked how the present organizations which call themselves Churches, or exist as societies for sound but limited purposes, whether they be sects or families or nations, are to be related to the whole body, we may refer to that which has been said above about the system of Election by which God's purposes are wrought out. In pre-Christian times, the Jewish community was the elect of mankind in the diffusion of divine righteousness, while other races had the leadership in art or in philosophy or the power of government; but when Christ had come, all were to be blended into one. A similar change is now demanded. The Church of conscious votaries of Christ must admit the value of other forms in which men have felt after the divine. The time is come when what is best in all those forms should be combined in friendly effort, without which each is limited and one-sided. They must aid and not counteract one another.

The present age is one in which we are compelled to extend our horizon and our efforts according to the fuller perception which is opened to us of the purpose of God. If science is learning that the world of Spirit is at least as important as that of matter, and that the two must be connected both in research and in action; the world of faith also

is learning that it cannot exist by itself, but must go forth in works of philanthropy, in efforts for the increase of knowledge and civilization, for the furtherance of public health and for international peace—that every human society is a great brotherhood, each member of which must learn to help the rest in the spirit of their common Lord ; and, if in the past co-operation between the different parts of the human family has been hindered by lack of mutual knowledge, this hindrance has been removed by the ease of locomotion, correspondence, and intelligence. The West has been the teacher of the East, and is learning that there is also much that the East can teach her. It is no longer possible to maintain as permanent barriers the languages or the customs or the religions which have separated us. And it is only a further step, though a great one, which will make us feel that manufactures and art and all the agencies by which human life is conducted, must abandon their selfish seclusion and minister to the general welfare; and further, that imperial rule must have a moral purpose for upraising the weaker, and inspiring the stronger with the duty and the blessedness of service. All this and similar considerations without number compel us to realize the purpose of God and the Kingdom of Christ, and to recognize that the true Church is that which can contribute most effectively to the great consummation.

If this is true, then we must enlarge our view

of the Church. It has hitherto been supposed that the Church is concerned primarily with public worship, and that whatever else it attempts must be conditioned by its relation to public worship. We must now consider it not merely as having a general influence on human life through the power exerted by public worship, but as uniting and merging itself in the general life, finding there the main field of its activity, and realizing that, if this is not done, its endeavours will to a large extent be sterile, and also to a large extent a hindrance to the highest good. It may seem a strange thing to maintain that two ordinances which have always been thought generally necessary to salvation are to be treated as no longer absolutely necessary. But does this not correspond to the facts? We are estimating Christianity in its natural bearing—that is, as connected with actual facts. As regards both the Sacraments, a true Christian judgment would surely say that, considering the verdict of history and experience in all its bearings, we are bound to believe that some of the truest Christians have been found amongst those who have discarded their use. If we speak of law we must go by legal maxims; and there are many acts which, though not precisely in conformity to the legal demands, may be validated by other means. A receipt, for instance, to use a homely illustration, is not valid without a stamp; but it is allowed to

prove the fact that the money has been received by other means; and certainly a man who has found difficulties in the forms of baptism or the Lord's Supper is counted amongst us as a brother Christian if we see in him the marks of faith and a good life. It seems almost a crime when, instead of extending the bonds of Christian fellowship, we erect fresh barriers against it, and narrow the membership of the Church by turning a privilege into a formal obligation, and making an ordinance like confirmation a law of exclusion. This is the high road of sectarianism.

It is certain that this course of exclusiveness presents Christianity to men in an unreal and an invidious light, and turns away the thoughts of sincere Christians from their true object, which is the regeneration of the whole life of mankind by the infusing into it of the Spirit of Christ.

Those who bear the name of Christ are needlessly divided. Even if the absolute necessity of the two Sacraments were not reckoned absolute, we should still have peculiarities of their administration to cause division; and the larger sections of the Christian body are divided internally by smaller differences of ritual or of opinion, almost all of which relate to some form of public worship or the discipline of its ministers, and have little cognizable influence on the life. Can we not form a true and more natural basis of fellowship, such as that which Christ and His apostles indicate,

by the fact that they spoke as little as possible of public worship and its forms, and bent all their efforts to sanctify the life of the community ?

The truest conception that we can have of the Church is that it is simply human society turned Christian. The Church sprang out of the synagogue, and the synagogue was simply the congregation or gathering of the whole nation. " Church " and " synagogue " are the same word, meaning the gathering of the nation in the name of God to carry on its life in His faith and fear.

The Jewish Ecclesia or Church was a nation, and Christ never said anything to show that *His* Church was to reject the national attributes and position whenever the nation should come in the natural order of conviction to confess Him as its true Lord. Only, according to the declaration which He made in answer to the confession of Peter, the foundation must be Himself. He must Himself be recognized as giving by His life, His teaching, and His self-sacrifice the fundamental principle of the national life, its laws, its social system. In the only other place in which He used the word " church " it was to urge His servants not to take the law into their own hands, but to bring it before the local councils or assemblies, by which the Jewish synagogues were administered, and which had power to enforce the law by excommunication and by stripes, and even by capital punishment where this was not prevented by

some power like that of Rome. Of course, the nation having apostatized, a new effort must be made to reconvert it; but the hope of a national status was never abandoned. On the contrary, the first effort of the Christian preachers was to call upon the nation to accept the true foundation: "The promise is unto you and to your children." Whether we read the speech of Peter at Pentecost or that of St. Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, we find the same national ring about the language; and when the Jews as a nation rejected the true King, the turning to the Gentiles meant not merely an appeal to individuals, but an appeal to the community as a whole. St. Paul was a Roman citizen, and, as Sir Wm. Ramsay has pointed out, he never lost sight of the nation in the individual. He speaks of the Gentiles as a whole. He sought out the great cities, Athens, Ephesus, Rome, the centres of the national life of the East, of Greece, and of the Empire itself. His keenest desire was to see Rome, not merely, we may feel sure, as the greatest aggregate of individuals, but as the head and centre of imperial power. If we read the Epistles of the Captivity we see the imperial idea constantly emerging; the dominion of Christ is to be universal like that of Rome; like the Empire it is to break down barriers and to unite all nations; it is to bind together the family which was the only corporate body on which effectual power could then be

exercised; but, looking to the whole of humanity and its future, so far as the power of justice and of government extended, St. Paul teaches that its rulers and ministers must, even at that stage, be recognized as the ministers of God.

CHAPTER X

ATTEMPTS TO MAKE HUMAN SOCIETY CHRISTIAN

1. The Church and the Empire

IT is a true though a melancholy reflection that when a more complete adaptation of Christian principles to imperial rule became possible in the days of Constantine and Theodosius, the result was not at once successful. But the chief causes of this may be seen in the view of the Church engendered by the centuries of persecution. It had been limited in its outlook and the range of its activity, so that it preserved the attributes of a sect; and the Empire meanwhile had been following out its own traditions of dominion. Consequently the church teachers never appealed to the Emperors to become ministers of God in their capacity of governors, but merely as protectors of a great sect. Laws were made for the keeping of Sunday, for the suppression of idolatry, and similar objects, in the interests of the Church as a sect; and the Emperors took part in the doctrinal controversies of the time, first with a view to peace and afterwards to enforce their own views. No doubt the true ideas of religion influenced the

legislation of Constantine and Theodosius; but these great rulers never seem to have felt that in their secular position they were servants of God and bound to rule justly and leniently. The well-known scene in which Ambrose repelled Theodosius from the Church on account of his cruel massacre at Thessalonica may be rightly quoted as an exception to this; but it has rather served in the course of history to enhance the claims of the ecclesiastical dominion over the secular power, than to raise the lay power to a sense of its Christian responsibility.

And thus the Church was started on its voyage through the Dark Ages, not as a comprehensive and expansive institution leading mankind in the path of righteousness, but as a clerical sect occupied primarily with public worship and the maintenance of forms of doctrine and observances, at times enjoying the protection of the secular power, at times opposing it. There were attempts at uniting the religious and common life, but such attempts were always frustrated by the false opposition which had been engendered between the two powers. Charlemagne wished to rule as a Christian sovereign, but his influence passed away with his personal rule and his empire. Hildebrand wished to make Christ a feudal Prince, but the Pope and the clergy were to be Christ's vicegerents, while the secular rule was in his eyes, and in those of his successors, little

better than organized robbery. The name of the Holy Roman Empire was assumed by the Emperor Frederick II as an assertion that his rights were as valid as those of the Pope; but the result then, as afterwards in the England of Henry II and Becket, was mainly the juxtaposition of two powers, the one representing secular justice in its harshest aspect, the other a clerical leniency which favoured the ecclesiastic but shielded the malefactor. It was the growth of national power and the conviction that only through the national organization could the divine justice and unity be established that were the strength of the Reformation. The appeal of the Reformers in their desire for justice was always to the sovereign and the nation. The nation became the Church, and the King its head.

2. England becoming a Christian Church

This is the constitution as established in England, and it has never been altered amidst all the vicissitudes through which our country has passed. No doubt there are many circumstances which are thought to have shaken it, and even to make it appear absurd to attempt to restore it or to argue in its favour. But there are good grounds for upholding it, as the present writer has always done. He ventures to assert, first, that this identification of the nation and the Church, or, to put

it more plainly, the assertion that the English nation claims to be a branch of the Christian Church, is one which has been made from its very birth, and, after many assaults from the clerical power, was definitely vindicated at the Reformation; secondly, that, far from its having been given up, it is at the present moment *in viridi observantiâ;* and, thirdly, that it is the condition of things best suited to the present condition of the Christian life amongst us, and contains in itself the promise of the future.

It will not be denied that in the Saxon times there was a perfect unity; the country acted as a Church even before it was one nation. The Witan contained both clergy and laity; and, though at times there were separate councils of clergy, they were summoned by the King, not by the Archbishop. The Bishop and the Earl sat side by side in the County Court, and the points debated in the councils, whether clerical only or mixed, were the same. When the Conqueror introduced foreign ecclesiastics and a foreign discipline of the clergy, it was with a view of bringing the clerical system more, not less, under the Royal control: he would not swear allegiance to the Pope, though that Pope was Hildebrand, and the Decretals now became English law. The English sovereigns on the whole maintained their right to rule over an undivided realm, though some of them, especially the Lancastrian kings, for selfish

advantages yielded for a time to a foreign power. So that when under Henry VIII the unity of the realm was definitely established by law, this was spoken of not as anything new, but simply as the restoration of the ancient subjection of the ecclesiastical power to the head of the Christian nation.

3. The Reformation. Subjection of Ecclesiastical to National Power

Historians have often been deceived by the use of the word Church. It had during the Middle Ages acquired the meaning not of the Christian community, but of the clergy and their immediate adherents. These formed a vast body, including, first, all the orders of clergy proper, then the monks, then persons attached as servants or otherwise to churches and monasteries, and lastly a vast number of what may be called protected persons, who were possessed of some slight rudiments of learning. A man, for instance, who was accused of a capital offence, could claim what was called "Benefit of Clergy" by reciting a verse of the Bible in Latin. The verse usually chosen was the first verse of the fifty-first Psalm, which gained from this use of it the title of the neck-verse. All this mass of people made up what was called Holy Church, and could claim certain privileges and immunities, such as "Benefit of Clergy"

above-mentioned, just as, in another sphere, the right of sanctuary was recognized. When, therefore, we read in Magna Charta that the Ecclesia Anglicana should retain its liberties, this does not mean the Church of England as it is now commonly understood—that is, a body of persons who attend public worship under particular forms, and are by them marked off from the rest of the nation (an interpretation which would have been impossible, since there were no Nonconformists), but the clergy, or rather "the clerisy," as they have just been described. Their peculiar laws or customs were to be respected—a proviso, however, which was subject to the recognized condition that the ultimate power, in the case of election of Bishops and Abbots, resided in the Sovereign. And, similarly, when the great Act of Appeals, in the time of Henry VIII was heralded by the declaration of the law that there are in England, as an Imperial whole, two sets of persons who are capable of declaring the law, the one in sacred matters, the other in civil matters, and that the division which is connected with the sacred—that is, the ecclesiastical—law, is called Ecclesia Anglicana; what is meant is not what we now call, somewhat vaguely, the Church of England, but the ecclesiastical body above described. It is sometimes argued from this very notable Preface not only that the Church of England, as we understand it vulgarly, exists as a separate body within the

nation, but that the King, when he claims to be head of this body, is asserting a personal power separate from the constitutional power expressed by Acts of Parliament; but the fact that the Preface is itself an Act of Parliament contradicts all such notions; and the statute itself not only lays down the constitutional law on the subject by its own authority, but actually requires the clergy to conduct the church services as they have before been held under penalties prescribed by Parliament alone. The further legislation of the Reformation period is all in the same direction. All the effective legislation was conducted by Parliament or by Royal proclamation. The position of the Convocations of the clergy under the reformed system has never been accurately defined. But whatever their position, it is certain that they represent the clergy alone. On the only occasion on which they passed laws with the Royal Assent, that is, in framing the Canons of 1603, it is true that they proposed to legislate for the whole nation; but this action was withstood by the Parliament, who spoke of themselves as a body of Churchmen, and protested against laws being passed by the clergy alone. It is a legal maxim that any statute of the realm which conflicts with an ecclesiastical Canon overrides it; and although it was held by Lord Hardwicke's famous judgment (which, however, has never been tested by the highest Court of Appeal) that the Canons of the Convoca-

tion were binding on the clergy, since the clergy were represented in that assembly, it is certain that they cannot prevail against the laws of the realm, which alone represent the "Church and realm" as a whole. It was said by Burke that the Convocations were nominally a part of the Constitution, but that, being then in abeyance, it would be very rash to give them any power: and the experience gained by fifty years since their resuscitation does not encourage any proposal to bestow legislative or judicial powers on them, nor on the body called Representative Council, which has been organized of late years on sectarian principles, and which would make the clergy supreme.

It is often argued that this national government of clerical affairs, or more properly the identification of the Church with the nation, was repealed by the Act of Toleration in the reign of William III, which gave liberty of worship to Nonconformists. But the fact that the nation, acting as a Church, allowed its members to worship according to their own consciences, does not imply that they ceased to be members of the English branch of Christ's Church—that is, of the whole aggregate of Christians who in their whole life are striving to serve God and to bring in the Kingdom of Christ. If the only duty of the Church were the conduct of public worship and the public teaching of religion in certain prescribed forms, it might be limited

by special laws framed for those special purposes; but it would then be a stunted and clericalist sect belying its best traditions, which are those of nationality and of universality.

It is not, indeed, to be denied that the language of the Toleration Act was somewhat ambiguous, and that the word Church of England was in some places used in the popular and limited sense which it still is apt to bear. But when Nonconformists are spoken of as "persons dissenting from the Church of England," it is evident that this dissent relates to the limited sphere of Church ordinances, and that the toleration given relates to freedom from the penalties previously enacted for non-compliance with these ordinances. No one who realizes that Christ demands the whole life of man would limit the Church in this way; and the tendency of national sentiment in recent times has been to dwell more, not less, on that side of religion which takes in the general life, and seeks to inspire the whole fabric of society with Christian justice and brotherly love. It is this which is meant by natural Christianity in contrast with the Christianity which is limited by ordinances. When such expressions are used they must be interpreted according to the matter in hand. When a person is asked, for instance, in reference to some position which he seeks, whether he is a member of the Church of England, he knows that the question relates to the narrower view of the

Church as a system of worship. But if he is claiming a position of citizenship, as in the times before the Test Act was abolished, or if, having no special ecclesiastical convictions, he asserts a right, say to a seat in his parish church or to be admitted to the Holy Communion, no one can deny him.* Such claims should be insisted upon and admitted readily; the utmost extension that is possible should be given to the boundaries of the National Church, even in such technical matters as these.

Leaving, therefore, these questions relating to the less important points, namely, the forms of public worship, about which the founder of the Christian Church hardly said a word, and looking to these matters of truth and morals, both public and private, towards which all His teaching was directed, we cannot but conclude that the main objects of Christian endeavour, and consequently of the Christian Church, ought to be the living out of the life of the whole community in its highest moral and spiritual power, and this not merely by means of the Church as an exotic or separate body, acting, as it were, from without, but by the actual living of the Christian life by all the

* Before the Test Act was repealed, and no man could be a member of a Corporation unless he received the Communion according to the Prayer Book, attempts were made to exclude from the Communion all who had not been confirmed, but the Courts held that no such exclusion could be allowed.

nation and in all the circles of moral activity which it contains. The Church of England can be nothing short of this.

This point needs to be insisted on. We talk in common parlance of "going to church," the action of the Church on the community, etc. But, if we are Christians, we *are* the Church. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," said our Lord, "there am I in the midst of them." These words have been commonly restricted to assemblies for public worship, instruction, and religious or charitable work. There is no reason for this restriction. Wherever men meet with a good purpose, they meet in Christ's name. The family meal, the daily meeting for the work of any calling which ministers to human needs, to art or knowledge or invention, all are gatherings in the name of Christ. Those who speak lightly of such occupations, and contrast them with the Church, have missed the teaching and spirit of the Master, and are doing a wrong to the Church, which (St. Paul says) "is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." True, they may be conducted in a wrong spirit, and then they are not Christ's churches: but also the gatherings or societies which we commonly call churches may become synagogues of Satan. If we have the Lord's Spirit, we shall be expansive. Our policy towards men and institutions will not be exclusive but inclusive, not driving them

further into the darkness, but trustfully seeking to make them fully partakers of the light.

4. This system still "In viridi Observantiâ"

But no doubt this view of the Church of England will strike men generally as an ideal rather than as a practical ground of action, so far have they drifted in the direction of clericalism; and it is necessary to point out that, on the contrary, it is both right in principle and perfectly feasible, or rather that it is in actual and strenuous operation.

First, then, the objection to the nation being itself the Church of England is made on the ground that the nation consists of many individuals, some of whom differ from others in their views of Christian truth or practice, and some even do not profess Christianity at all. But this is exactly what is to be expected in a vast community such as the nation. In such a community there is hardly a matter on which all are agreed, and yet we are one. The principles on which we act and the standard of right are on the whole well-known and observed. There is probably no great aggregate of human beings which is fundamentally more united than the British nation. If we go back to the foundation of the Church itself, the only foundation which is laid, which is faith in Christ, implies a trust in the essentials of humanity,

which He alone fully represents, and consequently every true man has in Him the essentials of this faith. Israel was the righteous nation, although many Israelites were very imperfect men, their kings frequently idolaters, their heroes as imperfect as Samson or Jephthah. If we go deeper and ask what was the divine verdict upon the nation, we find in the prophets denunciations of judgment upon wickedness and apostacy, but no attempt of a select few to claim that they themselves are God's special favourites to the exclusion of the rest. Israel is to be blamed and chastened, but he is Israel still; and those who made the highest profession are those who are most reproved. It is true that in the first Christian Churches each individual was called on to make a profession of faith and to accept baptism: and such a profession must always be a means of grace—it is a blessing in every way to belong, by a definite act of profession and incorporation, to the holy brotherhood. If we turn to the New Testament, we find the language of our Lord to be that of extreme condemnation of the leaders; but these very men are recognized as "sitting in Moses' seat," and even Caiaphas is treated with respect. The nation is full of sects, but a man is not separated from the commonwealth of Israel because he is a Pharisee or a Sadducee, an Essene or a Herodian. Can it be right that a follower of Christ, because he differs from the largest body of His

people about Baptism or Confirmation, should be treated as outside the Church ? In the Church of Corinth even those who denied the Resurrection were not excommunicated. And, further, the society has a right to make its own rules. But a society which is set up with a view to embracing humanity as a whole must become more and more universal : its arrangements must be constantly readapted to the progress of mankind and become less and less exclusive. If, on the other hand, the boundaries of the Church are to be fixed by the clerical power, it is evident that a disproportionate stress will be laid on public worship and its details : and the old controversies of the fourth or sixth, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will be revived, and the more important matters of general human interest will be put out of sight and severed from Christian influences.

It will, perhaps, be argued that there is little danger of this since the tendency of religion in the present day is to go forth into social enterprise. We have " institutional churches " and Christian Social Unions, and exhortations to the younger clergy to take part in society, its interests and its amusements. No doubt the general feeling which prompts such measures is a good one ; but there are two dangers in it. The first of these is that a vast amount of labour is forced upon the clergy which ought to be undertaken by the laity. The accounts of charitable institutions in a parish

very commonly devolve upon the parson, the correspondence and finance of the Church schools is conducted by him, and he is praised for the vastness and multiplicity of his work. But, so far as they are permitted to join in Church work, the laity feel more and more that it is not their own work, but that they are merely helpers of the clergy, and, having no power, they by degrees lose all interest and initiative, whereas in a healthy Church life every member should feel that he is bound to take an active part.

But the other danger is still graver, and has hardly yet begun to be felt. It is this, that a separate and limited body undertakes to do the social work of the whole. This body which affects to be " the Church " assumes to do what can only be properly done by the national organs. It does it necessarily only in part, and will not co-operate with others. If we hear of a Christian enterprise with the affix " church " before it, we at once know, first, that it will be conducted under the control of the clergy ; and secondly, that no Nonconformist need apply. And when such an enterprise is found to cover but a portion of the ground and the work is taken up by the national power, those who have begun it often show a jealousy of what has grown to be their right of control, and insist on continuing to impose their own special views as conditions of joining in the common work—and then religion is made to appear as a hindering, not a helping

power in human progress. When things have come to this pass, Christianity, instead of being recognized as a stimulus to the natural development of social good, is made to appear as a hostile force, and awakens, even against our Lord Himself, an indignation and hostility which should be directed against the unchristian infatuation and action of a section of His ministers. This seems to be the chief matter to which attention should be directed in most Christian countries at the present day, and its difficulties must be solved by taking a natural and common-sense view of the situation, and realizing that it is in this rather than by insistence upon ecclesiastical rules that the work of the Spirit of God is to be seen. Such words as, "It is right to save life, not to destroy it," sweep away a vast mass of false religion.

We may return then to the proposition that a nation may be a Church, as the Jewish Church was; and, if so, that it ought to act as a Church. We have in the earliest Christian records the narratives of whole families which became churches, such as those of Cornelius the centurion or the jailer at Philippi. Are we to suppose that they were all fully convinced of such truths as the divinity of our Lord or the Holy Trinity? Evidently they simply followed where the head of the family led, and bound themselves to "live soberly, justly, and godly" in the present world. When St. Paul in the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of the

Christian family, it is evidently a body composed of the same persons who before had been a heathen family; he says nothing about Christ's doctrines or ordinances; he speaks of them simply as a family who are conducting their mutual relations in the spirit of our Saviour. And in the Epistle to the Colossians and Philemon he speaks of the family and their friends as "The Church in their house." If we examine the Epistles to the Corinthians we cannot but see that they are addressed to what has been called a "multitudinous" body, among whom some denied the Resurrection and many were living in immorality; yet the only person who is to be cast out is a man living in incest, and he is to be re-admitted as soon as he shows signs of repentance.

We may put this in another way. When any individual becomes a Christian, he is the same man, with his special character and relations. He takes Christ for his Master; but, while he places himself in Christ's school, you find him often a sadly mixed character; you trust, nevertheless, that good will triumph over evil in him. A similar change passes over a nation. When the Saxon kingdoms one by one became Christian, the mass of the people followed their kings and gave a general assent to Christian teaching and discipline. Some ten thousand persons are said to have been baptized in a single day; they entered the school in a mass—but it required

centuries to elapse before any large part of them reached its higher classes. And this view of the matter—that is, of a mass of humanity all bound up in social bonds, with many different grades and gifts, all working upon each other for good but with varied success—is evidently that of St. Paul. In his pastoral Epistles, which have a special value for us as dealing with a more advanced social organization, he describes the whole body as the "house and Church of the living God," the "pillar and ground of the Church" (1 Tim. iii. 15). Yet of the same body he says (2 Tim. ii. 19): "In a great house there are vessels of gold and silver, of wood and of brass, some to honour and some to dishonour."* That is a description which will apply to the nation-Church which we are speaking of. We cannot argue from the fact that it contains a great variety of characters and beliefs with special practices that it is not a real Church; for, if St. Paul in the first century could describe it thus, much more, after the changes of human society in eighteen centuries, must it be expected, and allowed for, that still greater variety will exist in the Christian nation without its ceasing to be Christian. Those who have set to work to

* And we may recall his injunction to Titus (i. 12, 13) to rebuke the Cretan Christians sharply because the testimony remains true. "The Cretans are alway liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons."

pick out a certain number and to call those thus selected, whether by their opinions or by their practice of special ordinances, by the name of Church or of " saints," which belongs to the whole body, have simply established sects which have denaturalized human life instead of restoring it to its proper ideal. It is true that Christians cannot all be alike. But a school of thought need not be a party, and a party need not be a sect, and a sect need not be a body separate from the Church ; the Church also should be as wide as possible, otherwise it will lose one of its noblest attributes, that of universality. If it loses that, at least as its acknowledged ideal and goal, it will cease to be " the body or fullness of Christ " and with this its claim to be the representative on earth of the Kingdom of God.

5. The system still " In viridi Observantiâ "

In what has been said so far it has been argued that there is nothing contrary to the claims of religion in holding that a nation may become a Church ; and further, that this must be at least the goal aimed at, if we hold to the teaching of the New Testament that Christ is Lord of all, and that, according to St. Paul's oft-repeated words, all rule and authority, all the powers and principalities which sway our lives, are subject to His authority. Christian people are so far from accepting these divine principles that they can

hardly be said to aim at giving them force. In many cases they absolutely deny them, and deride those who maintain them. It is not seldom that we hear them represented either as worldly or as impracticable. But, putting aside such thoughtlessness, as it must be deemed, it is not unreasonable so ask, first, Whether such a state of things has ever existed as that of a nation or commonwealth being also a Church? and, secondly, Whether this can exist consistently with freedom of conscience and with the expression of varieties of religious experience in special societies for Christian worship and instruction? I think that a little attention to historical and present facts enables us to answer these questions in the affirmative. We must, however, hold fast these axioms: (1) That the object of the Church is not, as is constantly assumed, merely the assertion and proclamation of Christian truth, but the living out of the whole life on Christian principles, not excluding certainly the department of life which is administered by the clergy, and to which the name of Church is often but wrongly appropriated in an exclusive sense, but also not excluding the other functions by which the general life of the community is conducted. (2) That the voice of those who administer these other functions is, in its measure, the voice of the indwelling God as truly as that of the ministers of public prayers and preaching—Christian worship and beneficence thus

becoming natural, blending with the development of human society, and both acting upon it and being acted upon by it. (3) That, as the Christian Society develops, the social action becomes the main call of the Church, and that, however valuable the definitions of doctrine or the special ordinances may be as the expression of Christian principles and the enforcement of these principles by public prayer and sermons and Sacrament, yet that the thing of chief importance is the living out of these principles in all departments, so as to claim each department for God, to make the world, one part after another, truly a part of the Kingdom of God. In this process every class of men has its part—the father of the family, the trader, the governor, the minister of health, the man of science or of art: each has his gift, and, as one of our noblest Collects says, his ministry, and the circle of life to which he belongs, is a necessary element in the process by which the world is to become not ideally only, but actually the Kingdom of God.

This ideal has never been wholly absent from the greater minds of the Church, but it has been fitfully realized or even attempted in action. And the attempts have been accompanied by conditions which have made its realization impossible. Sometimes, as in the reigns of Constantine or Theodosius or Justinian, as their codes show, the application of Scriptural ideas has been enforced, but in a narrow and tyrannical fashion, often quite

losing sight of the spirit of Christ. Sometimes the zeal for orthodoxy has led to the suppression of great elements of truth. Sometimes, as in the case of the laws of Charlemagne, the strong man who had imposed them had no successor of adequate force. Sometimes, as in the attempt of Hildebrand, it has been marred by the attempt to make the clergy supreme. Sometimes, as in the later Middle Ages, the greatest elements of religion, the worship in spirit and in truth, the worship which consists of righteousness and holiness of life, has been crushed under a weight of ceremonial and superstition; sometimes, as in the age succeeding the Reformation, the violence of controversy has made men lose sight of the Christian life and spirit altogether.

Nevertheless, the attempts have been in the right direction. Their comparative failure should not make us imagine that they are wrong in themselves, but should stimulate us, as in every other case of social reform, to do away with the faulty elements, and seek to give life to those which are sound. And at least it will be allowed that in England the unity of the nation and its profession of Christianity has been not a mere attempt, but in the main a great reality. Our laws are truly and increasingly a Church Discipline, far more effective than any clerical code, for "the punishment of wickedness and vice and the maintenance of religion and virtue." And the

great acts which have banished persecution, emancipated slaves, softened the criminal law, made education universal, raised class after class to the full rights of citizenship, have been, though often resisted by those who are called the Church, great acts of the Spirit of God. The nation itself, not a section of it, has shown itself to be the true Church of Christ.

It is not necessary here to do more than point out that in the great nations of Europe the assertion of this unity of public life with Christian morality has been consistently made and carried into effect. It is so in Russia, in Germany, in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Holland. In France, and largely also in other Roman Catholic countries, we see the evil effects of the Papal system overlaying the genuine Christian life, making it constantly more rigid and sectarian, casting out all liberal thought, and thus, while claiming to direct the national conscience, perverting it, and driving it into infidelity.

And the great public acts which have banished persecution, emancipated slaves, softened the criminal law, made education universal, raised class after class to the full rights of citizenship, have been, though often resisted by those who are called the Church, great acts of the Spirit of God. The Nation itself, not a section of it, has shown itself to be the true Church of Christ.

In England, as has already been pointed out,

the unity of the ecclesiastical with the national power has existed from the first, and the ecclesiastical (miscalled the spiritual) has been kept subject to the national. Even the Conqueror, though he carried the banner of the Pope at Hastings, would not do homage to him: and, though he admitted various ecclesiastical changes, he did so with the object of bringing the whole system more fully under the national supremacy. And when, at the Reformation, the Royal or National power was re-asserted, this was done not as a new thing, but as a restoration of rights which had been impaired by a false and foreign element. No one can doubt that the Reformation brought the clergy under the National power, or that the attempt of Laud and his compeers to make the clergy supreme under the separate Government of the King and apart from the Parliament drove the nation into rebellion, or that the policy of the Restoration, reactionary though it was, gave no countenance to the idea of a clerical church independent of the national organs.

But it is said that the Act of Toleration in the reign of William and Mary broke up this national unity. It has been shown above that this was not its purpose or its effect. The nation remained in the truest sense a Church, that is, a community endeavouring to carry out the principles of Christianity in the whole of its public life, but gave permission to its citizens to form associations

for public worship freely. Some disabilities remained, and the Sacramental test was enforced as a condition of holding certain offices ; but these tests have been removed by the sense of justice in the nation-Church, which has often shown itself so much more Christian than the ordinance-Church which stood in the way of notional union.

It would be impossible, in a treatise like the present, to examine minutely all the documents which govern us in regard to these questions. But a few of the more obvious may be touched upon, with the remark that one of the strangest things in human life is the way in which men go on repeating words of the plainest import, and yet refuse to acknowledge them in practice.

Take first the power of legislation. It has already been pointed out that all the great Acts of the Reformation period were passed by Parliament without any recognition of the clergy—sometimes in the teeth of clerical resistance. They contain the Acts of Appeal in which Appeals to Rome are taken away and given to the King, who is to deal with them in the same way as with Admiralty cases, and no pre-eminence is given to the clergy in the Commissions which are to hear the Appeals : and these are followed by Acts which deal with the ecclesiastical judicature in a directly anti-clerical sense.* They contain also

* See especially the Act for laymen to be judges in ecclesiastical courts, 37 Henry VIII, c. 17.

the two Acts of Uniformity, establishing the two Prayer Books of Edward VI, and the similar Act of Elizabeth, which was certainly opposed by the Convocations, and which, it may be noted, contain the Ornaments Rubric so much relied on by those who would bring back the ordinances to the form which they took before the Reformation, but which refers to Parliament and Parliament alone as its authority. It is true that, in accordance with the usual mode of action of those days, as seen in the case of the *Congé d'Elire*, the old forms were allowed to remain, but all force was taken from them; and the power of the Convocations of the clergy, though not completely destroyed, yet was so hampered in its exercise that it has never since been used successfully either for judicial or for legislative purposes; and it has become a legal maxim that the Statute law of the nation overrides any Canon of the clergy, whether ancient or modern, which conflicts with it.* It is true that the right of the nation itself to legislate on all "Church" questions has been hampered of late years by the clericalistic movement of sixty years ago; but no other mode of legislation has been set up or even proposed; and, though it is often said that Parliament is

* It is possible that even more decisive action might have been taken in the subjection of the clerical assemblies but for the fact that they still retained the power of the purse until the reign of Charles II.

unfit to legislate on ecclesiastical matters, its legislation during the last century has included all the facilities for forming more parishes and relieving spiritual destitution, for the formation of more dioceses at home and in the colonies, for the admission of Scotch and Colonial clergy to officiate in England, numerous Acts for the discipline of the clergy and the improvement of the Church services, such as those for the improved Lectionary and the shortened services, and the alteration of the tests or subscriptions made by the clergy, a great and liberating Act, against which the clerical assemblies had lately protested. It is true that Parliament very rightly objects to discussing matters of ritual or doctrine ; but its attitude is very much the same as that taken at the time of the Act of Uniformity of 1662, when, though the House of Lords is believed to have made some alterations in the Prayer Book, the Commons, having before them the Book as proposed by the Government after examination by the Convocation and the Savoy Conference, passed two resolutions : one, that this House would not enter into the details of the Prayer Book, the other that they had the power to do so. This is, in fact, the attitude which has been taken in almost all cases throughout our post-Reformation history in regard to matters affecting religious worship ; the proposals of change have been prepared by Royal Commissions, the general direction

of which has been given by the national Government, and the Legislature has accepted the finding of the Commission as to details. This method of legislation has remained *in viridi observantiâ*; nor has any other been proposed nearly so just or so effective. We are not engaged in discussing a new constitution; the present is sufficient and is in active exercise; and the burden of proposing a change rests with those who are discontented with our present practice. But though the inclination of clerical opinion and of Churchmen in the narrower sense shows a certain discontent, they have hitherto failed to propose such a change even as regards the narrower field of Church life, that which is confined to the sphere of public worship and its immediate adjuncts. When we look to the wider view of the Church which is now opening out to us, and think of the nation itself as inspired with Christian faith and of the national life as grounded upon Christian justice and beneficence, it is evident that no clerical or sectarian power can possibly be substituted for that of the nation itself. To remove grievances, to raise the poor, to teach the young, to make taxation just to all, to bend the powers of the criminal law to the recovery of the erring members of the community, to train the people in a life which shall be clean, healthy, and orderly, to encourage international peace—these are the acts of the Christian body, by whatever name we call it, and the attempt

to do the work of the greatest instrument of Christian progress by other than national means is nothing but an usurpation, and can never elevate the usurper, but will, if successful, surely drag down to a lower level the true and complete community.

The system of unity of the nation as a Christian body under its sovereign and the national organs, is witnessed by all our formulas of worship as used at the present day. The inauguration of the sovereign is not merely, as it is usually called, his coronation, to be the head of a secular body, but his consecration as head of a Christian nation. He is clothed with episcopal robes, and the Bible is given to him with the adjuration that he should rule according to its principles. He is to be the Christian ruler of a Christian people. It is sometimes made a complaint that it is no more the King who is supreme, but the Parliament; and that, though the allegiance of the clergy and those who call themselves Churchmen in the more limited sense is due to the King, no such allegiance is due to the great council of the nation. But the same might be said of every department of Government in a State of which the monarch has become constitutional instead of arbitrary; and the argument, if admitted, would drive us into absolutism or into anarchy. Further, the Parliament has never ceased to be Christian, but prays daily in the Saviour's name

for guidance in its deliberations, and the whole Church adds its prayer. And if what has been said of the limits of the Church, and also of its wider functions, be true, our allegiance is due to the body which represents the nation and Church in its larger sense quite as much as to the sovereign personally. It is to be desired that in any reform of our Prayer Book the changes from Tudor times to the present should be emphasized, and that it should be made clear that the prayers for the sovereign are meant to be for the national power as it actually exists—the " powers that be " which are " ordained of God " and are " His ministers."

It is not necessary to dwell on the constant mention of the sovereign in our prayers; but two special instances may be made prominent: the one that in the Litany, where we ask that he may be kept in the true worshipping of God, which is defined as " righteousness and holiness of life," and which indicates that the Christian unity of the nation does not depend solely nor even primarily on the formalities of public worship, but on the whole Christian life in all its departments: the other that after the recitation of the Decalogue; the prayer is not for the clergy and their teaching, but for the King as a minister of God, that he may enforce the Commandments by governing the people in wealth, peace, and godliness; and similarly in the prayer for the Church militant, before anything is said about

the clergy and their functions, the prayer is for the sovereign as a ruler of the whole nation, and for those who bear rule under him, that they may repress wickedness and vice, and maintain justice, true religion, and virtue. If in this connection we study the Bidding Prayer, the image rises before our minds of a vast community, in which rulers and subjects, clergy and laity, and the whole of the common people, are striving in the name of Christ to maintain the principles of true religion in the conduct of their life, individual and public. That is the true Church of England; for, since the same prayer defines the Catholic Church as "the whole body of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world," the "Church of England" must be understood to mean the whole body of Christian people in England.

But further, it may be said that these documents belong to a time which has passed away. On the contrary, they are *in viridi observantiâ* at this moment, and are producing fruits of the greatest importance, such as can never be produced by a separate society and its organs. The maintenance of the present system is a constant protest against sectarianism and clericalism in the conduct of the national life, and gives it a direction towards the building up of the whole community in all its branches in practical Christianity. The attempt*

* Those who have promoted and framed this Council have never disclosed their objects. The present writer endeavoured

which is now being made to substitute for this a body defined by forms of public worship alone, and which is limited to those who adhere in the narrowest sense to these forms as they were settled in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, must result in the perpetuation of division, in fixing the minds of Christians upon the points on which they differ, not on the progress of divine justice and truth in the general life, in which they may agree and work together; and, by making too much of the element of public worship which is the special department of the clergy, it must tend to give them an undue position in the Christian body; and this again is sure to be followed by reaction and rebellion. A clergy attempting to rule is sure to make agnostics, indifferentists, and enemies.

We must therefore hold on to the present constitution as most in accordance with the will of God so far as it is given to us to understand it. There are three principal features of it on which we may touch: the legislative, the judicial, and the financial.

in vain to elicit some such disclosure, the only answer being that the formation of the Council had been determined on. One of the Bishops on another occasion considered that the three great matters dealt with in the next sections, namely, legislation, judicature and finance, might be expected to be committed to the Council.

6. Beneficial working of the System in the Present Day

(*a*) *For Legislation*

On the legislative we have already dwelt, showing its justly supreme position and its continued beneficial working in the present day. If we think of Christianity as the great elevating power over the whole life of man, we cannot but see how much better this great cause is advanced by Parliament than by any clerical assembly. The clerical assembly is for the most part occupied with matters of dogma and of ritual, about which Christ said hardly anything, and which are treated with something of professional, if not sectarian narrowness; the Parliament has before it the whole life of the nation, and, even when it deals with directly religious questions, is apt to impart to them a more moderate tone and a greater consideration for the larger life of the community. Who would dare to say that public education or the licensing question or the public health or the poor law are not matters of primary concern to the Church of Christ? Who can deny that one at least of the most pressing needs of the Church system is some plan for giving the Laity generally in each parish a voice in its administration? Yet the hopes of those who desire a just settlement of these matters are fixed not on some exclusive Church body, but

upon Parliament. They know well that any sectional body, such as that called the Representative Church Council, would hinder or cripple any full reforms.

(*b*) *For Judicial Purposes*

Yet no progress can be made with them except through the national legislature. As regards the judicial power, the fact that the judges in the ecclesiastical courts are not the bishops but trained lawyers, that the law they administer is "the King's ecclesiastical law," and the final appeal is to the Privy Council, has preserved the influence of English justice in a sphere from which it has been apt to be absent. Each of the great ecclesiastical parties has by turns had its liberty vindicated by the Privy Council Court, when the ecclesiastical court would have condemned it: the evangelical section in the Gorham case in 1850, the liberal section in that of the Essays and Reviews in 1864, and a few years later the Sacramentalists in the Bennett case.* The protests raised by what appears to have become the dominant section of the clergy and their

* In each of these cases the Court which represented "the Church" in its narrower and clericalist sense gave a wrong, that is an unchristian judgment; the Court which represented the national power gave a just and Christian one. It was the national power, not the sectarian and clerical, which spoke the word of righteousness, which is the voice of God and of His true Church.

followers against these decisions seems to show a greater regard for the privileges of their order than for justice. But it is justice, not ecclesiastical privilege, which is the divine attribute. It is to the ministers of plain justice, not to the upholders of a separate class-law, that the solemn words are spoken, "I said that ye are gods." (Ps. LXXXII. 6; John X. 34.)

(*c*) *For Finance*

As regards the third branch of national power in the ecclesiastical sphere, the financial, who can doubt that its administration under Statute Law by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners has been of the greatest value? The Commission has husbanded the vast revenues which it controls, and which had been miserably wasted while in clerical hands, in a manner which has made them far more valuable and far more serviceable to the Church system which they are designed to support. He would be a rash man who would give these back to clerical management. All these three spheres, the legislative, the judicial, and the financial, have proved the importance of applying to the ecclesiastical affairs—that is, to the system by which Christian worship and teaching is administered under the care of the entire community—the plain principles of justice and of common sense which we apply in common life; they are examples of what we mean by Natural Christianity.

(*d*) *For Administration*

One more exercise of the national power must be mentioned as showing that its authority as that of the Church itself is no theory but a thing in common use; it is the appointment to Bishopricks and other ecclesiastical offices by the Crown. These appointments are made on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, who holds his office by the consent of Parliament—that is, of the nation. If this practice, though sometimes objected to by theorists, is acquiesced in by all but a few, it is clearly an instance of the nation exercising the full power of the Christian Church in one of its most important functions.

7. The System has the Promise of the Future

(*a*) *For Christian Unity*

There are many other matters to which these principles may be applied, matters of present and living interest. We are all conscious of "the danger we are in through our unhappy divisions," and there is a genuine desire to heal the breaches which were made between the various societies of Christian worshippers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But as yet this desire has had little result. May we not assume that this frustra-

tion is due very largely to the fact that we have made Christianity a kind of exotic plant hardly touching the general and natural life of mankind, and sometimes touching it for mischief? All the bodies of Christian worshippers seem now to be feeling this. Their present methods do not attract men as they formerly did. Public worship is not so well attended; the Bible is not so much read. There are probably many reasons for this, and we need not attribute it to a lessened interest in religion; certainly the manner and extent in which religion is discussed in the Press, and the activity both in foreign missions and in social progress which is common to all the divisions of religionists, would lead to the conclusion that that interest was on the increase. We may expect that the indifference or alienation caused by the criticism of the Bible or of the Church system will pass away; we have seen many changes in the popular conception of religion even in our own day. The views of serious men about inspiration, about the mode by which the reconciliation between God and man has been effected by our Saviour, the ideas connected with rewards and punishments in a future state, and many other points, are not now the same as they were half a century ago; and, though those who have advocated these changes have met with the usual fate of reformers and been treated as enemies, both they and their followers have kept their hold on the essentials of

Christianity, and there has been a marked return from mere criticism and scepticism to the Bible and to Christ.

Nevertheless, the divisions between Christian denominations or sects still remain, and are a perpetual reproach and a provocation to unchristian feelings.

It is thought that if the process of unification which our formulas imply, and which it has been attempted to draw out in this treatise, were made effective in the present day, it would involve some form of constraint or persecution on those who differ from the main principles of such a unification, or from some details of its application. But if there is goodwill, this fear will prove to be groundless. We again appeal to nature. Is it natural that men who have the same object in life, who recognize each other as brothers, should stand apart in mistrust because of some matter of minor importance? No doubt if we set out with a theory that a difference about the forms of public worship must cause this mistrust and separation, such an exaggeration will produce and aggravate the evil. But, we ask, is not such a notion fictitious? We meet each other freely in all the dealings of life, in education, in business, in society, in matters of art or of knowledge; and in all these we do not ask whether such a man is a member of a peculiar sect, but whether he is true, just, right-minded? If so, we trust him and

work with him without scruple.* Why should a difference about the modes of public worship separate us? The theory, no doubt, which supposes that our Lord Himself laid down the lines on which His followers should organize their public worship, and bade them stand aloof from all who did not accept this rule, would make us mistrust each other; but if our contention is true that the life is the real standard (and Christ Himself said, "By their fruits ye shall know them"), we must seek for union, and seek it not in the forms of worship, but in the realities of life. We all confess that the true life is that which is lived in accordance with the principles of the life of Christ. "Grace be with all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." That is the word of an Apostle; but we have the direct teaching of our Lord Himself as its source. As has been pointed out above, His disciples ask Him whether they are to forbid one who exerted a spiritual power in His name but did not follow with them, and He replied, "Forbid him not." In later times it has not been uncommon for Christians to think that faith is shown by strict adherence to some rule or definition; he alone is a "good man" or a faithful Christian or a

* It was thought that when the Universities were freed from tests, religion would suffer and strife would be promoted; but the contrary has been the case. Men of different denominations associate and work together with hardly a thought of their differences.

"good Churchman," who holds some mode of expressing Christian doctrines—often mistaken or sectional. Let those who judge thus remember that they are directly placing themselves in opposition to Christ. To love Christ, to own His spirit to be supreme, to exert an influence over men in His name—it is this which makes the Christian. We again recall the fact that our Lord's teaching contains no direction about the matters we dispute about: our sectarianism is of our own invention. Moreover, of late years, those who have investigated the history of the early Church have shown that the forms of worship or the position and government of the clergy, which form the subjects of our disputes, are not inherent in its primitive constitution. The idea that there is a class of men so completely set apart from the rest by a divine law as that no blessing can attend any Sacraments or other ordinances administered by others, is found to be contrary to historical truth, as well as to Christian brotherliness. The organization of the Church is seen to have been made according to its needs from time to time, not to have been imposed upon it by a divine decree; it is essentially secondary as compared with justice and truth and love, and also essentially mutable. It is thus that the Spirit leads us. There is no external and unchangeable rule to Him who "breatheth where He listeth."

If that be true, there is no longer any need for the perpetual enforcement of rules or laws which were framed in past centuries under conditions which have passed away. It was held by the late Archbishop Benson that there was no reason why the various denominations in England should not continue their own modes of worship and government while included in the same national Church body ; only he would have excluded those who received the Holy Communion otherwise than according to the order of the Prayer Book—that is, from episcopally ordained clergy. Is it not time that this rule should be relaxed? It is well known that the most eminent divines of the Church of England, even in the seventeenth century, urged their clergy when abroad to communicate with the Protestant non-episcopalian churches. If a corresponding relaxation of our rules were adopted, and all penalties for inter-communion were removed, the way, it seems, would be open for a complete religious peace.

It is, no doubt, almost a dogma with our non-episcopalian churches, that the national power ought not to interfere with the affairs of religion. But this arises from a supposition which we are combating, namely, that by religion is meant the ordinances of public worship. If religion is, as is being here maintained, a matter of the whole life, the government of the municipality, of the county, or the nation cannot but be constantly occupied

with matters essentially religious, such as education or marriage or public morality, and the general well-being of the citizens. The community is becoming more and more the chief moral educator; and, though the enforcement by law of Christian principles must be, as we have learnt during the last four centuries, not immediate nor absolute, yet the influence of these principles upon our laws and public life is increasing, and is a bulwark not of compulsion, but of tolerance. The danger of the lay power interfering unduly in matters which touch the conscience, against which our forefathers had to contend, is now hardly more than a bugbear. The outcry against it is really the complaint of the clergy and their special adherents who attempt to usurp what belongs to the national power; and it has been shown above that, where the lay power has intervened, as in the ecclesiastical judgments of the Privy Council, it has been the wholesome corrective which common sense and justice and liberty legitimately exert over clerical prejudice.

Yet it is felt by many that the position given to the clergy of the Anglican Church, in assigning to them alone the tenure of ecclesiastical benefices and committing to them the authoritative inculcation of religion in every parish, bears unjustly upon those who cannot accept the Anglican forms of worship.

This is undoubtedly a great difficulty; yet it

does not appear insoluble. If the whole life of the community is the life of the Church, and we accept the present and actual condition of our constitution under which the nation-church, though it has two sides, is yet one whole, which cannot live rightly without full weight being given to each side, then the system under which the general ecclesiastical affairs are controlled by the national organs should be extended to the parishes. If parochial councils could have been established when the proposal for them was carried to a second reading in the House of Commons in the year 1872, and the Government of the day had not in the succeeding year broken their undertaking that they would facilitate its full discussion, justice and equity might have reigned instead of the clerical autocracy which has been allowed to alienate one class after another, and has gone far to reduce the Church of England to a clericalist sect. A few changes might have been found necessary, such as the allowance of the preaching of Nonconformists in the church pulpits, and of the Anglican clergy in those of the Nonconformists, under proper control; and the quasi-legal if not illegal license given by the Bishops to a few laymen to officiate in the Church might, without breach of discipline, have been legalized and greatly extended, so as to draw out the gifts of the laity and to diminish the evil of a multiplicity of small parishes, each with its own pastor whose

presence is more needed elsewhere. The late Archbishop Benson, as we have seen, declared that there was nothing to prevent each Nonconformist body governing itself as they do now, and, like the Orders in the Roman Catholic Church, be subject to their own Generals, if only the separation at the Lord's Supper could be avoided. Surely, if that be so, alternative forms might be arranged which would present no stumbling-blocks to either party, and one or other of which might be adopted according to local needs. This would become more and more possible as men became accustomed to look at the whole life as the subject and expression of Christian faith.

It would be vain to attempt to forecast the future. What we can do is gradually to free ourselves from the fetters forged by the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, to prevent new ones from being bound upon us, and to encourage all that tends to the unveiling of Christian truth and the establishment of Christian brotherhood; being guided by the twin powers, both of which, it has been contended here, are natural, the circumstances in which God's providence has placed us, and the right judgment which is the gift of His Holy Spirit.

(*b*) *For the Advancement of Knowledge and for Social Progress*

It may seem on a cursory view of this treatise as if a part of it were of merely ecclesiastical interest, and that it has little to do with the present and future needs of the nation and of manhood. This might be a valid criticism if our standpoint were that commonly taken, with its separation of human life into the opposing spheres of the secular and the sacred. But it is one chief object of Natural Christianity to do away with this antithesis ; and if the principle at the root of this treatise is sound, this unity of the powers which have been separate and antagonistic has with it the promise of the future. Instead of teaching men to dread the progress of knowledge, it will further it with all its might. Instead of dreading the advent of democracy, it will rejoice that the mass of our brother-men are rising in the social scale and in political value. It will aid the cause of freedom and of peace ; it will, by awakening the Christian conscience of the nation, help men to abandon the selfish and shortsighted policy which is inducing them to limit the race in order that the few that may be left may be richer, and will teach them to value a pure family life, and think it a noble duty to send out its members to assist in the task of developing the world by

their ever-increasing power, and raising its inhabitants by a truly Christian civilization; and it will do all this under the impulse of faith in the Father and Redeemer of mankind, who "will have all men to be saved," and to co-operate with Him and with one another in making justice, truth, and love supreme in every heart and in every society.

CHAPTER XI

EXPLANATION OF RELIGIOUS TERMS IN A NATURAL AND PRACTICAL WAY

1. God

"This is life eternal, to know Thee"

THE fault of most of those who have spoken of God has been that they have assumed a knowledge which is beyond us. "No man hath seen God at any time," and in our ignorance we attribute to God actions, feelings, limitations which belong to ourselves. Even when we assert that He is a Person, we have to beware of what is called Anthropomorphism, the framing of an idea of God after the image of man. We cannot, for instance, help speaking of Him as just and loving; but these attributes may easily pass, the one into hardness and want of sympathy, the other into favouritism or easy indifference. "Is He the God of the Jews only, and not of the Gentiles also?" exclaims St. Paul; and the outlook which is given by the answer to this question leads us far beyond the limitations even of our present ideas. In the controversies of the fourth and subsequent centuries concerning the Godhead, each party seems

to have supposed that they knew the metaphysical nature of God; and the difficulties of forming a satisfactory theory were those of harmonizing newly perceived facts with preconceived ideas, the Incarnation and divine supremacy of Christ with men's presumed knowledge of the nature of God. Even when we take in the second part of the text above quoted, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him," the difficulty is but partially removed. It is one of the advantages which come to us through non-Christian theories, such as pantheism or materialism or even atheism, that they make us more modest in our assertions.

It is better for us to begin with what is actual and, in the true sense, natural, with the Eternal Energy which moves and redeems the world, and to judge of its character by the facts which history discloses, to rise through the supremacy of man in the creation, to the supremacy of special races and individuals, and thence to the supremacy of Christ, and the revelation through Him of the Name or character of the Father. No doubt the higher and fuller revelation has at times disclosed itself partially and prematurely, and we shall welcome such intuitions whether in ancient or in modern days, whether in those who had a more distinct revelation or in those who were only "seeking the Lord, if happily they might feel after Him and find Him." But for the

most part the saying of St. Paul describes the fact, "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural" (or rather, human in the lower sense). It is in harmony with the saying of Aristotle that "That which is first in nature (that is, in the true nature of things) is last in coming into being." *

The metaphysical nature of the Almighty Power which rules us is only in part disclosed. It is enough for us that His character has been made known to us in the character of the best men, and in the life and death of Christ. The greatest hindrances to belief have come from the misrepresentation of His character of God, chiefly through a too literal acceptance of Scriptural expressions, and through non-recognition of the progressiveness of revelation, which implies imperfection in the early stages; and our hope lies in the return to the simplicity and naturalness of the Gospel. That God is a Spirit; that He is a Father to us all; that the whole development of the world in its creation and its history has had in it a purpose of love, that God Himself is holy and just, and that those who imbibe His Spirit and follow His Will are alone fulfilling the purpose of their being and of Nature in its higher sense, and that He has purposed to bring back into unity and perfection through the redemptive power disclosed in Christ the whole race

* Arist., *Metaph.*, i, 8 (7), Πρῶτον τῇ φύσει ἔσχατον τῇ γενέσει.

of man, and with it the whole world which is subject to man, is what the New Testament teaches. We accept it not as a matter of scientific exactness, but of faith, a faith which is not mere belief, but which carries the whole life with it. This faith grows to assurance through the testimony of history and of experience. It is this revelation of God, His Name or nature and His purpose, which was preached by Christ from the very beginning of His ministry as "The Good News of the Kingdom."

This view of the power and character of God enables us to realize His presence and unity in the whole course of the world and of human affairs, and to dissociate our faith in Him from most of the notions which have divided Christians and have enslaved them to disputable and fettering systems. It identifies God with all that is good in mankind, and especially with the spirit of Christ, and gives us the impulse which is needed to make good prevail; for "it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

2. Jesus Christ

When we utter the name of our Lord we are not uttering a mere name but a proposition. The preaching of the Apostles was that "This Jesus whom we preach to you is the Christ." The Christ or Messiah was shadowed forth by the

prophets as the one who was to be Lord and head of the people of Israel. The intimations were not perfectly clear, but enough to fix the mind of the people on the One who was to come. What Jesus did was to embody in His own life the deepest and fullest features of the life the prophets had sketched, and to show that the highest ideal was not that of outward grandeur, nor yet of adherence to rules and forms of religion, but of service and self-devotion, closing with the great self-surrender of the Cross. Upon two occasions of the greatest importance the question was asked by Him, or of Him, whether he was the Christ, and He answered that He was. The one was in reply to St. Peter's answer (which he Himself approved) to the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 15, 16); the other, His own answer to the question of the High Priest (Matt. xxvi. 63–4), "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said." This was the affirmation that the character of meekness and equity and self-sacrificing love which was shown forth in Him was that to which the history of Israel had led up, and which gave its possessor the spiritual Kingship over the conscience, the heart, and the life of the nation. He was Lord of all whose hearts God had opened to discern the true, the divine goodness.

But what is this to us? That depends on what the Jewish race is to the world. It was chosen to be the typical nation, elected to show forth by its ideals, by its sins, its sufferings, and its endurance the conditions of man's life, both individual and in society, and the principles by which it is guided, and which are natural and divine—natural because divine. History has confirmed the words of St. Paul that the events of the Old Testament were written as examples or types for the admonition of all later ages. And the fact that Jesus has shown Himself, especially at the Cross, to be in the spiritual sense the King of the Jews is our guarantee in claiming for Him a spiritual dominion over all; he is the destined Judge and Saviour of all mankind.

3. Salvation

Every system of religion, Christianity most of all, sets before those who are attached to it that which we all call salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It would hardly be wrong to say that to most men the very goal they seek in religion is to be saved. But to most men the idea of "Salvation" is rescue from a terrible doom awaiting the sinner in the world to come. Of this doom something will be said further on. But it is important to point out at once that the New Testament speaks

of Salvation mainly as a present possession. "By grace ye have been saved"; "By grace ye have been saved through faith" (Eph. II. 5, 8). "He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life . . . hath passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). If we follow this teaching we think primarily not of the future (except as the culmination of the process), but of the present. Secondly, we are learning to think less of personal safety from punishment, and more of immunity from a sinful and evil condition of the spiritual being. "He shall save His people," not from punishment or from suffering, but "from their sins." Further, the expression Salvation implies not merely the negative side, the cessation of certain evils, but the state into which their cessation brings us, a state of spiritual health—that which is put before us in the patristic writings as *Salutare Domini*. We may compare with it the common expression "safe and sound." It is the possession of the new life, with all its activities, its efforts for good, both in the individual and in society, and it allies itself with the progress of the race and the central hope of the Kingdom of God. In this it is eminently natural. All the world understands, at least in some measure, what is meant by a sound state of the human faculties. Christianity gives the complete and therefore natural meaning to this soundness. Moreover, the constant brooding

over a state of condemnation and our escape from it induces a morbid state of mind, and one little calculated to advance our own good and that of mankind. The old idea is that of a religion of death, and of the steps needed for the mere removal of death; the Christian religion is a religion of life, and makes us partakers of the energies of God, and of a life of unceasing progress.

4. Condemnation and Hell

It is astonishing to observe what a vast part the idea of eternal punishment has played in religion, especially in its popular forms, and how texts of scripture, which either do not bear upon it or merely shadow forth the misery of exclusion (which may be removable) from spiritual blessedness and the remorse of a sinner in the presence of the Holy One, have been strained to form a picture of physical torments to endure through endless spaces of time. In the reaction which has taken place against this tendency the natural feelings of mankind and a wholesome revolt against cruelty and injustice have borne a great part. But it may be well to touch upon a few of the principal expressions and texts which have been supposed to teach the doctrine of everlasting punishment, and to ask how far Christianity is responsible for such teaching.

Several such passages occur in the teaching of

Christ Himself, and some writers and teachers who have renounced His allegiance have done so on this account. We may take as central the words (Matt. v. 22) "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (margin, Gehenna). Gehenna was the horrible place outside Jerusalem where fires were kept burning to destroy the offal of the city, and where the bodies of the worst criminals were cast away. It gained its name from "the sons of Hinnom," to whom the valley had belonged, and is also called Tophet by the prophets, who use it as a symbol of horror, a place where the worms never cease to crawl or the fire to burn. Our Lord is describing in the hyperbolical language which He uses for purposes of emphasis, the enlargement which His spiritual teaching gives to the commandment which forbids murder. In the ordinary administration of justice there were three degrees of punishment, for homicide, for cases where there were palliative circumstances, and for the very worst cases of murder; the first would be punished by the "judgment" of the ordinary local court, the second would be brought before the central council of the nation, the Sanhedrin, the last would be dealt with probably by some summary process, as a glaring notorious case, and the felon's body would be cast into Gehenna. "In My Kingdom," our Lord's words imply, "not the outer act only will be taken account of, but the man who harbours passionate

feelings of anger or condemnation or contempt will be looked upon as a criminal and viewed as worthy, according to the gravity of his offence, of analogous condemnation; He is not laying down a system of penal law, but, by a powerful metaphor, evoking the moral condemnation of evil passions.

We may select another saying of our Saviour at the close of Matthew xxv. 41. "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," and "These shall go away into eternal punishment." The words "ye cursed" are in the margin, "ye who are under a curse"—their selfish life is the curse, it is not a curse that Christ inflicts. The everlasting fire is prepared for Satan and his angels; and, no doubt, whatever the spiritual meaning may be—suffering, shame, remorse, disgrace, into that the selfish man must be plunged. But it is the fire which blazes which is eternal, not the continuance of the wretch in it. And when it is said, "These shall go away into eternal punishment," we must note that the word eternal does not mean never-ending, but is a word to which no single English word is equivalent—it means at times "essential," at times "divine" or "spiritual"; and that the word "punishment" is properly chastisement; so that we may understand the meaning to be, They shall depart into a state of spiritual chastisement which will touch the very essence of their being. To infer from these sayings a belief in a state of never-ending

torment and rebellion inflicted by the just and loving Father of mankind, is a persuasion which is both terrible and mischievous. But we have gained freedom from it not merely through the labours of scholars and theologians, but still more through the common sense of mankind. It has become unbelievable to all who can say that God is our Father and that His name is Love—and to all who feel that a just and holy God cannot deal with His creatures in a manner which every good man in the world would condemn.

But one thing more must be said on this point. The negative process which refuses to believe in everlasting torment has been fully worked out. But the more positive side has hardly yet been approached. If, as has been feared by those who have held to the doctrine, the disappearance of it would mean an assertion that God is indifferent to evil, and that it is well with the wicked and we may promise him life, we might well ask whether the raising of the question had not been harmful. Without the exaggerations which have been grafted on the teaching of Christ, His teaching about a sinner's doom is still truly awful. Christian teachers must not cease from their attitude of warning; but they must dwell less upon the selfish and hard view of the punishment which a supreme judge may inflict, and much more upon the appeal to the conscience which is made by the thought of sinning against eternal love.

5. The Wrath of God

This is another expression which has played a great part in Christian teaching. "Flee from the wrath to come." "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness." Or, in the words of St. Paul (Eph. II. 3), which are incorporated into our Baptismal Office, "We are by nature the children of wrath." "What!" many pious souls have exclaimed, "can we impute the harbouring and exhibition of anger to the heavenly Father?" Men speak unguardedly of an "angry judge"; but no judge would be tolerated who allowed himself to be angry on the bench. The calm, dispassionate condemnation of wrong is that which gives weight to the words of our judges. Nevertheless, where cruelty or tricky dishonesty is brought home to the criminal, a good judge will hardly restrain the strong feeling of indignation. We must observe, however, that the object of God's wrath is in its true essence not the sinner, but the sin. And a just indignation, if shown by one in authority, will always be directed, not to the injury of the wrong-doer, but to his reclamation. In the scriptures every punitive infliction is attributed to the wrath of God, as, for instance, St. Paul's prediction (2 Thess. II. 6, etc.) of the destruction of Jerusalem. What is anger in the weak man against his child is sublimated, when spoken of God, to a hatred of the evil

which is injuring His children, and a determination, even by the infliction of suffering, to rid them from it.

6. Apostasy of the Race

If any one were to tell us that he did not believe in the fall of man and his alienation from God, we should say to him, "Look around, then," or, "Go through the streets of our cities at night," or, "Read the newspapers which give accounts of the police or divorce courts." Many other such replies might be made by pointing him to facts at home and abroad, among Christians and heathens, all tending to the same conclusion, the conclusion of St. Paul, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." All depends, no doubt, on the standard we adopt. But in any case the result is similar—every man has some sense of right and wrong, and no man lives up to the standard which he acknowledges. And if the world is, as both Christ and St. Paul declare, to stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, that is, to be judged by the standard of perfection which His life presents to us, it is certain that none can face that ordeal. The standard is perfect love, and not only every person, but every act and feeling is in some measure tainted with selfishness.

But there are three things to be observed as to the way in which the subject has been dealt with.

1. We are confronted with the old and ap-

parently insoluble problem of the origin of evil, as to which we can only say (1) that God is better served by free allegiance than by compulsory or automatic movements, and that freedom implies the power to go wrong; (2) that we could not know goodness in its highest form except in contrast with evil and in overcoming it; (3) that God has not left us without the means of deliverance; and that (4) as a repentant sinner gives more joy than a man who needs no repentance, so a world redeemed may be a nobler thing than a world into which sin has never entered.

The question of the Fall, as told in Genesis, is answered first by the general admission that it is of the character of a myth, that is, of a moral truth projected into the world and made vivid by passing into a story—the moral truth being the curse of disobedience; but that the curse is not final and in some respects, especially by the consciousness of good and evil, implies a step upwards in human development rather than a fall. It is the loss of innocence, but the awakening of the higher moral sense, the knowledge of good and evil, and the consciousness of the struggle by which the evil is to be overcome.

And, finally, we must recognize that the declarations of scripture concerning sin have received an exaggerated sense. "*Tout dans l'Ecriture est idéal*," was the saying of Adolphe Monod; that is, the character of "the good" and "the evil" are

portrayed in words which have no exact counterpart in actual life. "He that is born of God doth not commit sin," says St. John, and "He that committeth sin is of the devil"; yet St. John also says, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves." The fault has been that, instead of such expressions being accepted as showing what sin is in its full, abstract and ideal form, they have been taken as describing the actual state of men; and each action which has, as all actions have, some taint of selfishness has been taken as a wilful and open-eyed transgression of the will of God. We must judge of the world naturally, as we see it, and admit that good and evil are mixed both in society generally and in each individual, and even in every action.

7. The Atonement

(More properly Reconciliation or At-one-ment)

The word Atonement has been made to "connote" many ideas which are now for the most part recognized as erroneous; but the fact which it implies is central and supreme. The word Atonement occurs only once in the English New Testament, and in that place (Rom. v. 11) the true meaning, "Reconciliation," has been substituted by the revisers. That we are reconciled to God by the Cross of Christ no Christian can doubt. It is a fact of experience of which all believers are

conscious. Christ came to show us God as our Father, and to exhibit in His own life the Father's true character as the deliverer of the world from sin. In doing this he provoked the enmity of those who limited the Father's love, and made His mercy to themselves the means of exalting themselves and despising others. It was in opposing these that He met with His death; and His death, therefore, was the most signal example of love. It was a sacrifice of Himself which was to reconcile the world. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John XII. 32); to Him, that is, as the image of the Father, and therefore to the Father Himself. It has had this reconciling power wherever men have felt the true meaning of it, and have been united with Christ in love, in self-denial, in adoration. The Atonement is a fact of experience.

Moreover, though the idea of reconciliation has been made to imply a change on the part of God, and God cannot change, yet the idea suggested by this is not wholly erroneous. It is true both that "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil," and also "the Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart," so that the change in man from one state to the other implies also a change in the aspect of the righteous Father towards him: and this change is effected by the Cross. Moreover, when this is represented as a sacrifice, this also is a true representation if the just and moral

view of sacrifice is preserved. "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit"; and this meek bearing of the consequences of sin is justly attributed to Him who by His divine sympathy "bore our sins in His own person." Nor is this a departure from what we are speaking of as natural; it *is* natural to us to say of a benefactor, "He made a great sacrifice for me." The greatest of all sacrifices is that of Him who "laid down His life for His friends."

It is only when exaggeration comes in that we have ideas which are unnatural and unreasonable connected with the Atonement. "The law must be kept," it is said, "and no repentance can avail—punishment must be exacted in its extreme form," or "Some one must die so that justice must be satisfied": then Christ is to be punished instead of the sinner; and, because the penalty has been exacted from the innocent, the punishment of the wicked is remitted. It is no wonder that such ideas of justice should have provoked opposition and driven men into scepticism. That the just man voluntarily bears the burden of the unjust and the consequences of his sin is a fact of daily experience, and draws forth our deepest gratitude; but that this should be exacted as a penalty, and that because the penalty had been endured by the just the wicked should go free, is a thing unnatural and impossible. A judge who should act on such a principle as this

would not be allowed to retain his position for another day.

But this interpretation of the Atonement is happily felt to be unneeded ; and it is ceasing to be held. It is due in a great measure to the neglect of the scriptural declarations in a most essential point. There are two effects of the Atonement, which may be termed the negative and the positive. The negative effect is the obliteration of punishment ; the positive effect is reconciliation in heart and will to God. The latter has been put aside, and the former almost exclusively dwelt upon. But in the scriptural declarations the reverse is the case. The reconciliation of the heart and will is always prominent, and often placed first, sometimes exclusively. The "new covenant" is, first, "I will put My laws in their hearts," and secondly, "Their sins, and iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. VIII. 10–13 ; Jer. XXXI. 33, 34.) It is said, "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter II. 24, 25)" ; but with what purpose ? Not that we should escape punishment, but "that we should be dead to sin and live to righteousness." Take the words of St. Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died" (R.V.), "and that He died for all, that they which live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who for their sakes died and rose again." Moreover, in the only direct and full statement

of the Atonement, that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the whole stress of the work of Christ is laid on that which is included in the words, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God"; all other ideas of sacrifice are "taken away" (Heb. x. 8–10) that this spiritual sacrifice may be exalted. And it is added, "By the which will we are sanctified." We are drawn in through it into union with the Father. This is the true reconciliation or atonement.

It is true that the forgiveness of sin follows upon this: and we may say that it is because of the power of the Cross to draw all men to God that it is also the instrument of forgiveness and of our being saved from punishment. The guilty soul naturally lays hold first of the promise of forgiveness; and the thought of mercy by breeding gratitude reacts upon the heart and disposes us to please God. But still the spiritual reconciliation is the primary purpose. We must not be constantly going back to think of the escape from a penalty, but must make the Cross, as the supreme revelation of divine love, the incentive to a life in union with God. This underlies the declaration of St. Paul that he would know nothing in his preaching but Christ crucified. That alone is the complete reconciliation.

8. The Blood of Christ

In hymns, in sermons, in pious conversation, we constantly hear the expression, "The blood of

Christ" used—"There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emanuel's veins," or "Oft as it is sprinkled on our guilty hearts," or "Louder then and louder praise the precious blood."

It is a scriptural expression, used by St. Peter (1, i. 1), "Elect . . . unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." We may hear it often on the lips of earnest Christians to whom it evidently has a powerful connotation. It is not the purpose of this treatise to hinder the use of such expressions of devotion, but to test them by inquiring what they mean when changed into the language of ordinary life, and thus to enable men to use them without unreality.

In touching on the Atonement we have seen how great was the power of the death of Christ over the consciences of men. It is the supreme expression in act of the divine love, drawing all whose hearts are open to receive it into the inner Sanctuary where they can be face to face with their Lord. Thence it issues to become "The Word of the Cross" (1 Cor. 1. 18), which is the foundation of the Christian life in its humility and self-devotion. The metaphor of the sacrifices is brought in, and explains itself simply. The sacrifice was the dedication to God of the thing offered, and the sprinkling of the blood was one of the actions which betokened the union of the offerer with the offering. The sprinkling of the blood of Christ, therefore, implies the union of the believer in the

spirit in which Christ gave Himself up to God. "May I be united with the true offering which cries, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.'" And, since this is not only an act done once for all, but one which lies at the root of the whole Christian life, the sprinkling becomes the bond which enables us to live in union with our Lord. If, further, we think of the Reconciliation as the pardon of sin and the abolition of its penalty, the words may be taken as the confirmation of the pardon of sin; and this is the sense in which they are generally and rightly used. But it must be remembered that the use of them by St. Peter distinctly implies the moral relation between the Lord and His servant. It is "*obedience* and sprinkling with the blood." In the language of common life, therefore, it will mean, May I be united in the self-offering of Christ to God, and may the reconciliation which was made by His death become effectual in my conscience and my life.

9. Christianity not Sectarian

In some of the representations given of Christianity, whether in books and systems or in prayers or in conversation, it is made to appear as a kind of afterthought, as something which might conceivably not have been, and consequently as a system of morals or of worship which merely takes its place among the tentative and passing

systems evolved from time to time in various places, instead of being the one final revelation of divine truth. It is one great advantage of the effort we are making to show its place in the whole scheme of nature that it becomes to us necessary and indispensable, like the sun or the air in the material world. "Christianity," indeed, has suffered greatly from the partial systems in which it has been set forth and which, by their complexity and even at times by their contradiction to our moral sense, have brought it into contempt. In some of the missions to the heathen the leaders have adopted for their converts the names of Brothers (and in England the name of Friends is justly honoured), in order to escape these entanglements, and there is amongst thoughtful people a cry of "Back to Christ!" for the same reason. The attempts to effect this purification have, however, in many cases cut off some things which are essential—the pruning of the tree must not lop away the necessary branches.

It was said by the prophet in his protest against idolatry, "The gods that have not made heaven and earth, even they shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens" (Jer. x. 11). And we cannot but adopt the words of Tennyson about the little systems which have their day and cease to be. This has been specially the case as regards Christianity. The systems have drawn us away from Christ, and, professing

to explain His position and enlarge His influence, have fatally limited it. Even Athanasius speaks as if the "Incarnation of the Word" depended on the fall of man. But the saying of another of the Fathers gives a truer view, "*Etiam si homo non peccasset Christus tamen venisset.*" His coming was the culmination of the whole process of the Creation and of Nature. That is the meaning of St. John when he says that all things were made by (or through) Him, and that He is the light of every man; and of St. Paul in declaring that the purpose of the Father is to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. i. 10), and that "He is the first-born of all creation" (Col. i. 15). The sectarian views which have fixed on some one part of the truth or of what has appeared to men to be the truth, whether of doctrine or of worship or of government, and have made it the whole, and have banned and deprecated all others, have crippled and maimed Christianity, and brought it into contempt. We have a right to claim that Christ is Lord of the whole world and especially of the whole human race, and that every good thing which has been done on this earth has been done under His inspiration, and tends to the increase of His Kingdom. But, even when we condemn the narrow views of some persons or sects, we may often perceive that, blameable as their denials are, their exaggerations have fixed the attention of men upon some neglected aspects of truth or of

conduct. And this gives us the right to believe that in speaking of Christ we are speaking of the central power of human life, the inspirer of good in all men everywhere, of the ruler's justice, of the lawyer's precision, of the scientist's zeal for the truth of fact, of the artist's love of beauty, of the tradesman's or the inventor's services to his fellows, as well as of the philanthropist's or the preacher's love for the well-being of those around him. All these are parts of the same all-stimulating and all-embracing love which the Almighty Father bestows on His children to bind the whole race into one. All are parts of the same Christian love which rises from the giving of the cup of cold water to a little child to the pouring out of the life-blood of the Son of God for the redemption of a world. The knowledge of this culminating act gives force to every part of the process; but, even where it is not known, the aspiration of every true man is a faith which will be counted for righteousness; and Christ has Himself declared that, where the promptings of the Holy Spirit are not resisted, even blasphemy against the person of the Saviour is not unpardonable. All human goodness, we must believe, makes for the restoration of mankind, not to some strange form of unworldly saintliness, but to its true nature and functions.

10. Conversion

We have spoken of a world which lies in wickedness, and of the work of a Redeemer or Deliverer. A word must be said on the process by which man turns from wickedness, embracing the power and love of the Redeemer. It is true that the process by which this change is wrought out cannot be traced completely. The soul is in direct contact with the Eternal Power and Love. But for this reason we must refrain from generalizing on the special cases which may be known to us; and this restraint has rarely been practised. Some who are deeply conscious of the power of divine grace over all those who are admitted into the Church dwell upon this admission as the main if not the sole agency. The controversy over Baptismal Regeneration has passed away. It has not been settled, and might break out again; but each side has learnt much from the other, and there is agreement sufficient to enable men to work together.

There are, again, those who, while admitting the spiritual advantage of baptism into the Church, hold that the great change denoted by conversion must be a matter of consciousness, that it is capable of being fixed and known, even as regards the time at which it takes place. But both these views in their extreme form have yielded

to the natural and common-sense view, which is also that commended by Christ Himself in the words, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and by St. John, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous." It is much more important to know that a man is good and a doer of good than to know how and when he becomes so. This does not imply that there are not cases of conversion which can be fixed and recognized, of which the supreme instance is the conversion of St. Paul. Nor, again, can anyone deny that there are many persons in Christian families who from their infancy and their baptism have been evidently subjects of divine influences which have grown stronger with each year and each circumstance. Our Lord, in speaking to Nicodemus of the great change, says, "We speak that which we know, and testify that which we have seen"; but, lest any one should limit the change to that which he himself has seen and known, or to the particular form in which he has known it, He adds, "The Spirit breatheth where it listeth" (John iii. 8 margin); we may refer also to the words of Rev. v. 6, "The seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

Moreover, the word Conversion has, by passing into a kind of dogma, been the cause of much misunderstanding. It relates, no doubt, in some passages of Scripture, to the complete change of nature, as "The law of the Lord is perfect, con-

verting the soul" (Ps. xix. 17), or "They have hardened their hearts lest they be converted" (Isa. vi. 10). But also, in other passages, it relates to a more partial change, as in the words addressed to the apostles, "Except ye be converted and become as little children," or to St. Peter, "When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." It would be a very harsh inference from these words to say that the apostles or St. Peter had been in a state of spiritual death till these words were spoken to them.

Nevertheless, the change on which we are dwelling is a great reality, and one which, though it comes from above, whether in its complete or its partial form, all Christian people must be striving for both in the individual souls with which they are in contact and in societies and nations and the whole world.

II. Up and Down

We are all aware of the difficulties which are presented by the contrast between the old and the new astronomy in religious writings and religious ideas. Those who wrote before the time of Copernicus thought of the earth as a plane and of the heaven as a firmament above it in which God dwelt. Christ *came down* from heaven to earth, and reascended from earth to heaven. The souls of the faithful went up to heaven to

dwell with Him, and the wicked went down below the earth. Neither in poetry nor in common conversation can we escape the difficulty which is thus set up. According to our present knowledge, what is "up" in England is "down" at the Antipodes. And even if we could go by an ascension through millions of miles, we should be no nearer to God. God works through all the universe; but we cannot localize Him; nor can we form any conception of that other world, beyond the conditions of time and space, where we hope to dwell with Him and "to be with Christ" and with "the spirits of the just made perfect."

The statements, therefore, whether as to facts and narratives or as to religious teaching, which were made in ancient times must be re-translated so as to adapt them to our present knowledge. There is no great difficulty in doing this when none but material questions are concerned. We make the transition for ourselves. No one imagines that, when he speaks of the sun rising or setting, he will be understood as implying that the sun actually mounts or falls. But in matters that involve either moral and spiritual teaching about the world to come, or the work of God Himself and His action upon the physical universe, the case is not so simple. When the Psalmist says that God went forth before His people (Ps. LXVIII. 7), or the Prophet that God

came from Teman (Hab. III. 3), or the Psalmist again speaks of God's going with the singers and musicians in the Sanctuary (Ps. LXVII. 24), no one would require us to take the words literally. Or when the Psalmist says, "He hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved," no one would be shocked by our saying that this is merely the impression which the solid earth makes on the imagination of one who does not know that the earth moves with an immense velocity round the sun. But when in the Gospels we read of the stars falling from heaven and the power of the heavens being shaken; or of the Sign of the Son of Man appearing in the heavens, or of St. Paul's words about the Lord descending from heaven with a shout, and of the faithful being caught up to meet Him in the air, it is not easy to interpret such words in a real and natural sense, or to defend the Apostle from the difficulties arising from questions such as these: Whence will the Lord come? Will He really be supported by clouds? Will He be seen only by those living on the small part of the earth of which the place of His coming will be the centre? and will the saints who rise make a long journey from the Far East or West to the place whence they will arise to meet Him? It would seem superfluous to ask such questions but that the literalism, which we may hope is passing away, still remains strong in some quarters, and that this gives a handle to the

scoffer, and causes perplexity to the honest inquirer. It may be therefore well to explain that such statements could only be made by one writing in an age in which the truer astronomical facts were unknown, and that all that they imply to us is that the faithful departed will not be separated from those still living, but will be joined with them in union with their common Lord in His glory.

Yet it may be well to go further and to ask what is meant by His glory. We still use in our hymns and worship the language of a King's Court or of Apocalyptic visions; but, when we sing or pray of palms and thrones and crowns, it is very difficult for children and simple people not to be dazzled by the outward show presented to the imagination, and to realize that the true glory is the moral glory of justice and obedience and love. And so, when we repeat the words of the Apocalypse, "Behold, He cometh with clouds," it is difficult for us to pass from the outward to the spiritual exaltation. Yet when our Lord used these words in His great confession before Caiaphas, that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God, He accompanied them by the words, "Henceforth," or "From this time forward (not hereafter in the modern sense) ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven," which indicate plainly that He did not mean that He was to sit on a throne, but

that He was to reign over the hearts and consciences of men, not that He was to come in outward clouds, but to be clad with the attributes of divinity, of which the cloud was the constant emblem ; that this " coming " was to be a coming in spirit and in power, and that those who were then compassing His death, and others, like the three thousand at Pentecost, in increasing numbers, would from that moment begin to realize that He was truly the supreme power, who would come with growing evidence through the ages, till every knee should bow to Him and every tongue confess that He is Lord.

The childish, literal view of the world and its future, to which the antidote has just been set forth, is by some writers attributed to Christ Himself. Some of the modernist school in France, and some of the latest writers in Germany, have set forth a theory that our Lord, like the writers of some of the Apocalypses current in His day, believed that this world would shortly be destroyed, that the new heaven and earth would come into being with Himself as King over it in the temporal and literal sense. But His general teaching would seem to make it impossible to attribute to Him such a view of things, nor can we understand how one who was beset by such carnal and childish views could be the Lord whom Christians worship.

12. The Church and its Ministers

It is constantly repeated in arguments about religion that Christ "founded a Society"; and it is inferred that this "Society" is now represented by what are now commonly called Churches —that is, companies of men bound together by some speciality of religious dogma or ceremonial, and mainly or primarily, if not exclusively, concerned with public worship and its immediate adjuncts. But "a Society" may have many different meanings, and the suggestion is that Christ's Church was a limited Society, such as one of the good societies of which so many exist among us, and that, as such Societies exist for some good but limited object, such as Peace or Temperance, so the Church exists for the limited objects above mentioned; while all that belongs to the general progress of mankind in government, science, literature, art, or commerce, belongs to another power which is called "the world," and to which "the Church" stands in various relations of mastery or submission, of friendship or enmity. It has been pointed out in this treatise that our Lord never said anything about what we call "going to church," that He prescribed no forms of worship or of organization, but left His followers free to work out the fundamental principle of faith in Him in the whole range of their lives; and that His Church was to be an all-embracing,

ever-expanding company, taking in every element of the complete life of humanity. The Church or congregation of Israel, into which He and His followers were born, was not repudiated. The first effort of Christ, as of John the Baptist, was to renew the heart of the nation by repentance, and to turn it to its proper destination, the establishment of the all-embracing Kingdom of God. When this failed, the nation hardening its heart, the apostles turned to the Gentiles; but the message to both Jew and Gentile was the same: the universal love of God, the great amnesty and pardon for all men, the establishment of a kingdom of justice and love for the whole world. The expansion of this kingdom was hindered by the persecutions; and the narrowness thus enforced has continued to beset the Church till now, and is proclaimed as an essential quality of it which must last for ever. The truer idea of the Church is that contained in the words of the Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." This great saying also has been narrowed so as to apply only to gatherings for prayer, and for the conduct and regulation of public worship. It ought to be applied to everything which is done in Christ's name and spirit. Every Society which is conducted with a view to the benefit of mankind and the promotion of the Kingdom of God becomes a Church.

It follows from this that every man who engages in his life-work (which we truly speak of as his calling—from whom if not God?) and looks upon it in the spirit which St. Paul enjoined even upon the slaves at Ephesus, telling them that they should with good will do service as to the Lord and not to men, becomes a minister of God. This is confessed in one of the noblest of our Collects, which, being used on Good Friday, connects its subject definitely with the Cross, in the notable words, "That every member of the Church in his vocation and ministry may truly and godly serve the Lord." Those whom we commonly speak of as "ministers," or clergy, as though they were the only ministers of Christ and His Church, should properly be termed "ministers of the word and sacraments," or ministers of public worship and its adjuncts.

If this be admitted, then the questions about what is called Church Government must be solved in the natural way by reference to what is demanded by the circumstances in which God has placed us. No form of government was enjoined by Christ; the first officers appointed were for a special and secular need, and were forced into the work of preaching, for which they were not appointed, simply by the necessities which naturally arose. The "elders" were a Jewish or Hebrew institution, and seem to have at first combined all the officers in one body.

The episcopate was formed gradually to meet special needs, different in different places, but gradually growing to uniformity. It is pre-eminently natural, since every body of persons acting together must have one head. In this sense it is divine; but this is the divinity which permeates society, and gives us (in their proper sense) the divine right of Kings, of parents, of magistrates, of tax-gatherers. Our object must be not to detract from the sanctity of clerical offices, but, first, to extend the sanctity to all rule, and to every work which ministers to the completeness of the life of mankind; and, secondly, to take all society into the Church; but, thirdly, to prevent the interference of the clergy as a body with the things not pertaining to them, as jurisdiction or finance; for such interference deters them from their proper calling and also robs the so-called "secular" callings of their legitimate sanctity.

13. Sacraments

The idea of Sacraments has been unduly limited. If we believe in God as immanent or indwelling in the whole Creation, then the Sacramental principle must be universal. Every part must speak of God, and to the eye of faith must convey Him to man. The tendency which we have deprecated of turning a principle into a special ordinance and limiting it to this has nowhere been more disastrous than in the sphere of Sacraments.

St. Augustine and other of the Fathers looked upon all the Jewish ordinances as Sacraments, and St. Augustine * praised the wisdom of our Lord in choosing out two of the Old Testament ordinances as supremely important, while letting the rest fall into oblivion. When St. Jerome in his Vulgate Version of Eph. v. 32 translated the words about the "mystery" of marriage by the phrase *Hoc magnum Sacramentum*, he did not mean that Christ or the Church had instituted marriage or had elevated it to a position equal to Baptism or the Lord's Supper, but merely that it was, in the general sense, an outward visible sign and means of an inward and spiritual grace. The Roman Church reckons five other ordinances as Sacraments, which is partly a recognition of the wider sense of the word, partly a limitation of it to particular ordinances. The Church of England limits the term still further to the two which are instituted, or, to speak more properly, adopted by Christ Himself. But we may well resort to the wider meaning. Baptism may be taken as a type of all purity and cleanliness, as St. Paul says (2 Cor. VII. 1), "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," or the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." And the idea of the Lord's Supper, which is that of a feast of fellowship in which God and Christ and our brethren partake,

* *De Doct. Christ.*, iii. 9.

leads rightly to the hallowing of all our meals. Richard Rothe, in his great work of *Theological Ethics*, takes one by one the chief occupations of mankind and shows how each is capable of forming Sacraments. The author ventures to quote a passage from his own Bampton Lectures * in which this aspect of the Sacramental principle is stated: "The outward objects with which we deal in all our associations together are not to a Christian mere brute matter. They have been changed by the alchemy of religious thought and feeling. They become to our apprehension the means by which God and the human spirit are perceived and spiritual blessings communicated. Each object of science reveals not only the law of its existence, but a part of God's nature. Each art reveals not merely natural beauty, but human feeling, which is also divine. The family life is full of the outward and visible signs of love, and 'Love is of God.' The common partaking, appropriation, and enjoyment of these, therefore, makes us partakers of each other and of God. . . . It is not too much to say that he who thus appropriates the outer world, realizes at every turn the inner meaning of the words, 'Take, eat, this is My body.'" The author would also quote the words of a very thoughtful friend: "I know but one Sacrament, and that is the whole life."

* *The World as the subject of Redemption*. Longmans. Revised edition, p. 255.

14. A Good Man

Vir bonus est quis ?

The object both of Creation and of Redemption is to produce goodness. We need not raise the question whether the individual or society comes first. Man is social. "Male and female created He them." Yet there can be no goodness apart from conviction and right conduct in each person. The point in question is this: Are there two sorts of goodness? Can there be a good man who is not a Christian? or a Christian who is not a good man? Such an assertion as Newman's, that a base, cringing Italian beggar who has faith is better than a sturdy honest Englishman who is not religious, at once rings false. And those who confine goodness to men who have certain religious feelings become sectarian. The larger idea of the work of the Spirit which has been advocated in this treatise makes things clearer. It shows that there is no man wholly destitute of goodness, that the Church in its fullest ideal allows of men approaching God from various sides, that Christ is Lord both of the faithful and of the unbeliever, that the Church is a school with good and bad in it, to lead them all to Christ and to God. But the question still remains as to the standard. Christ has shown us the true one;

but it is like a diamond with many facets, and none must be denied. The two great evils to be avoided lie in the tendency to exclusiveness. The Pharisee boasting of his own goodness might be good in the points which he mentioned; he was wrong, first, in comparing himself with the publican; secondly, in the attempt to make one form of life and goodness prevail exclusively; thirdly, in not recognizing the good side of bad actions or men. If we avoid these dangers we can walk freely, accepting the various standards—faith, honesty, courage, meekness, good sense, strength of purpose, gentlemanliness, self-control; but knowing that these are each of them only shoots from the stem of the eternal righteousness, which found its full expression in the Cross of Christ, and using whatever influence we have to make this appear. Perhaps nothing has more hindered the acceptance of the Christian standard of life than the chasm which men are often made to feel between holiness and simple honesty, though a Christian can hardly deny the words of Pope that "An honest man's the noblest work of God." If this chasm can be bridged over by mutual knowledge and considerateness, a great part of the contrast which exists between religion and ordinary morals, between Church and world, will be removed, and we shall fight no more, as we have been apt to do, like ships in the night which do not recognize each other, but as brothers united

amongst ourselves against the powers of darkness, with Christ recognized more and more as the Leader. Nothing can be conceived more powerful than this as capable of drawing men from sin and ungodliness, and bringing in the object of all true endeavour, the kingdom of righteousness and peace and love.

It is, indeed, argued most truly that it is not enough to have a true standard of goodness before our eyes: we want a motive principle to make us strive towards it, often through opposition and suffering; and the Cross of Christ is to the Christian both the standard and the motive; nor can any description of the Christian life be better than the simple words of our baptismal service, by which we are engaged "to confess the faith of Christ crucified," "to be made like to Him," and "manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil." We need also an object for which to hope and to strive, and this object is the Kingdom of God, the state of things in which Christ will reign completely over every heart and every society of men—that state which is drawn out symbolically in the pictures of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse. Hitherto the greatest part of Christian endeavour has been spent in the effort to save individual souls out of ruin; but the language of the apostles constantly leads us beyond this. It says Christ *has* saved us, and we are workers together with Him to establish

His Kingdom; and He Himself has said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John xii. 27). The Kingdom has unfortunately been very commonly made to appear to men as the supremacy of the clergy or a conformity to some wilful and limited system; insomuch that, when men speak of a theocracy, a reign or Kingship of God, this is usually taken to mean the rule of priests or of a coterie which has usurped the name of the Church. This has been the fatal idea which has brought about the alienation of men from religion so markedly in a country like France*, but which in a less degree exists in all civilized countries. We see two forms of goodness standing up in opposition, and at times seeking to destroy one another. The way, the only way, out of such an unnatural state of things lies in the teaching which it has been the object of this treatise to enforce, the teaching which expands the object of Christian endeavour so as to take in the universal good of mankind, and to recognize the Christian standard of goodness in every effort by which the human race is being raised. When this union is effected, we may hope to give a fuller meaning to the Church as being the complete Society of mankind imbued and inspired with the indwelling of God and of Christ; and we may repeat with a fuller and truer meaning the words in which goodness is described

* See a remarkable play (lately acted in the Paris theatres) by M. Paul Loyson, termed "Les âmes ennemies."

in both the Old and the New Testament, the one speaking of the man "that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart" (Ps. xv. 2), the other of "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

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